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THE JOYFUL HOURS OF JESUS

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BY
J. GIBSON LOWRIE, D.D.

"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit."—LUKE x:21.

"Looking unto Jesus, . . . who, *for the joy that was set before Him,* endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.—HEBREWS xii:2.



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To all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and especially to the churches I have served in the Gospel ministry, this little volume is dedicated.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE volume here submitted to the public presents the brighter aspects of our Lord's life and ministry. Though not specifically connected, nor progressively developed, the various chapters of the book have a unity of theme, in that they all have to do with His gladdening life-work.

It is the hope of the Author that the friends of our blessed Master will welcome this humble effort to call attention to His "Joyful Hours," and that because of it some weary souls may "with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation."

J. G. L.

GALESBURG, ILL.

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I

ELEMENTS OF HAPPINESS IN JESUS' LIFE

THE Bible speaks of the joyful hours of Jesus: but its utterances on this delightful theme have been strangely neglected. Expositors and teachers have dwelt almost exclusively upon the sufferings of Christ. To the Church in all ages He has been pre-eminently "a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." We do not wonder at this, for His sufferings were very real, and at the close of His life unparalleled: and upon His painful death are based our hopes of salvation.

Beside this, it was natural that the martyr Church of the first Christian centuries should emphasize the sufferings of her head, since thus she derived sympathy in her trials and consoled herself with the thought that she was "filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ" (Col. i: 24). It was literally through much tribulation that the early Christians entered into the kingdom of heaven. What wonder that they dwelt much upon the sorrows of their Lord,

feeling that the disciple was not above his Master! What wonder that the Cross threw its dark shadow not only over the closing scenes of His career, but over His entire Life!

A celebrated letter from Publius Lentulus to the Roman Senate gives a description of the person of our Savior. Among other things it says of Him, "He was never seen to smile, but oftentimes to weep." The letter is undoubtedly spurious; and may not be earlier than the Fourth Century, yet it reflects the current conception of the early Church—a conception that has not died out of the world.

While holding all that is vital as to the sufferings of Christ, we may form a saner judgment of His life as a whole by looking upon the bright side of the picture. His life was not all gloom. He was foretold as One who should give "the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isa. lxi: 3). He bade His disciples, even in the hour of their tribulations, to "rejoice and leap for joy." His final blessing was that His joy might remain in them and that their joy might be full. We are told that He took little children in His arms and blessed them. Surely it was only a countenance beaming with unaffected gladness that would win them to nestle contentedly in His bosom.

What were the elements of happiness in the life of our Lord?

What were some of the joyful hours of Jesus upon the earth?

These are the questions we aim now to discuss.

Let us say at the outset that we have every reason to believe in the happy boyhood of Jesus. As Stier has beautifully said, we have but a "solitary floweret out of the wonderful inclosed garden of the thirty years." After His infancy, the scene in the Temple is the only one that is accorded us of the early years of our Lord's life. And a single word, dropped by one of the Evangelists, is all the authoritative information we possess as to how these early years were spent. Mark calls Him "the Carpenter." A humble avocation was His, and a life of seclusion and toil, and even poverty is suggested by it.

But we have no reason to think that it was any other than a very happy life. When we reflect how much man's happiness depends upon labor we cannot look upon this period of our Lord's life with regret. He has forever dignified the lowliest toil by becoming a carpenter of Galilee. As truly then as in later years, when busied with far different labors, He could say, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John v: 17).

We are not to think He was *only* a carpenter in His Galilean home. There was much that Jesus began to *do* before He began to teach, and even

in these early years His Father's business was never absent from His thoughts.

But whatever were His employments, before He began His active ministry, we have no reason to think He was burdened with sorrow. Nazareth was not indeed a Paradise. Its inhabitants were rude and uncultured; their lives were narrow and circumscribed; they had their deep prejudices; and later rejected Jesus in the meridian of His power. Nevertheless, Nazareth was a safe retreat which the fierce storms of the outer world did not disturb, and where He who was "to destroy the works of the devil" had opportunity to prepare for the conflict and "gird His sword upon His thigh" (Ps. xlv: 3).

In its quiet seclusion He was not brought directly into contact with the passions, strifes and tumults of men which made the brief season of His active ministry so stormy, and which so often stirred His pure nature to its lowest depths with holy anger and righteous indignation. And though Nazareth had no immunity from sickness and death, yet not there, as in after years, did he assume that He might bear the infirmities of the multitude. Doubtless He never even witnessed at Nazareth many of the maladies of men His power was afterwards present to heal.

What were the occupations of His boyhood, outside of the little shop of Joseph? We have only the general statement that He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God

and man" (Luke xi: 52). We have no reason to think His was a different life from that of His boyhood acquaintances, save in the fact that "He knew no sin." He must have prattled in innocent glee at His mother's side, like other babies. He must have joined in the healthful sports of His boyhood companions. We are told that in His active ministry there was a "disciple whom Jesus loved" (John xx: 2). Was there no boy friend whom Jesus loved, as in after years He came to love John? We do not know; but we cannot but believe He knew the joys of intimate friendships even in childhood and that His holy influence fell as a benediction upon some youthful companions who were quickened by it into spiritual life. A poet has said,

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy."

What an atmosphere of beauty and joy must have ever surrounded the wonderful boy whose thoughts were pure, whose spirit was in communion with God and whose delight was in doing the will of His Heavenly Father! What a heaven earth would soon become were every child like the "holy child Jesus!"

Perfect physical health contributed, in no small measure, to the happiness of our Lord. There is no evidence that He was ever sick. There is much to indicate that He possessed a sound and healthful body. He lived the simple life. He was much in the open air. He was temperate in all things.

He possessed a tranquil mind. He held empire over his passions. He conformed to all the laws of physical well-being. We may believe no body was ever so fit as His to be, because of its physical perfection, the temple of the Holy Ghost.

No body enfeebled by disease, unless sustained by constant miracle, could have endured the strain of His extraordinary labors during His active ministry. The Evangelical Seer had indeed said of Him, as he beheld Him afar off in vision, "We did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted" (Isaiah iii: 4). But the Evangelist Matthew applies Isaiah's description directly to Christ's ministry of healing. "He cast out the spirits with His word and healed all that were sick; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses" (Matt. viii: 17).

It is indeed true that many disciples of Christ have lived happy lives whose bodies have been smitten with disease and filled with pain: but they have been happy in spite of physical sufferings and not because of them; and their happiness would have been greater had they each possessed "a sound mind in a sound body."

And the mind of Jesus, no less than His body, contributed to His enjoyment of life. His was the gift of genius, without those irregularities and peculiarities of temper that we are compelled so often to associate with the word.

The inner kingdom of His lofty spirit was always under the control of His will. His intellectual powers were unimpaired by indulgence and never suffered because of internal derangement. His mind fed upon Truth. It obeyed the laws of thought. It had capacities for happiness unknown to those who walked not upon the heights He trod.

His out-of-door life and his bodily and mental vigor opened to Him another and deep source of happiness in the enjoyment of nature. We are told "The Lord shall rejoice in his works" (Ps. civ: 31). Surely then, even in His humiliation, He by whom God made the worlds (Heb. i: 2) rejoiced in the works of creation. The most elevated souls have the keenest appreciation of the beauties of the outer world. How then must nature have appealed to the lofty mind of Jesus! The enchanting beauty of His Galilean home must have often refreshed His spirit and awakened pleasurable emotions far transcending those of sinful men. When disappointed and depressed in His contact with the dull minds and evil tempers of His fellow townsmen how often did nature greet Him with "a smile and eloquence of beauty" and how often did He find in her "a mild and healing sympathy."

Speaking of the scenery around Nazareth Dean Farrar says: "The view from this spot would in any country be regarded as extraordinarily rich and lovely: but it receives a yet more indescribable

charm from our belief that here, with His feet among the mountain flowers, and the soft breeze lifting the hair from His temples, Jesus must often have watched the eagles poised in the cloudless blue, and have gazed upward as He heard overhead the rushing plumes of the long line of pelicans, as they winged their way from the streams of Kishon to the lake of Galilee. And what a vision would be outspread before Him as He sat at springtime on the green and thyme-besprinkled turf! To the north, Hermon upheaved into the blue the huge, splendid mass of his colossal shoulder, white with eternal snows. Eastward, at a few miles distance, rose the green and rounded summit of Tabor, clothed with terebinth and oak. To the west He would gaze through that diaphanous air on the purple ridge of Carmel—and the dazzling line of white sand which fringes the waves of the Mediterranean, dotted here and there with the white sails of the "ships of Chittim." Southward, lay the entire plain of Esdrælon, so memorable in the history of Palestine and of the world, green as a pavement of emeralds, rich with its gleams of vivid sunlight, and the purpling shadows which floated over it from the clouds of the latter rain." *

And what wonder that Jesus loved the solitudes of Olivet and of Gethsemane? Not only did the Father meet Him there, but there nature stood,

* "The Life of Christ," Vol. i, p. 101.

with open volume, to delight His eye and to feed His ever expanding intellect. What wonder that the Great Teacher saw so many beautiful analogies between nature and grace, and that He adorned the lily of the field, the hanging vine, the springing grass, the noble trees with new beauty as, forming them into a spiritual alphabet, He made them set before us new lessons, which he who runs may read, of the wisdom and goodness of God!

But our blessed Lord, though thus a lover of nature and holding "communion with her visible forms," found His chief "rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth, and His delights were with the sons of men" (Prov. viii: 31). He was not like John the Baptist, a man of the desert, austere and abstemious. He was no ascetic. "The Son of Man came eating and drinking." He was a man among men. His social qualities were marked. His first miracle was at a marriage feast. He accepted invitations from rich and poor alike. He ate and drank with publicans and sinners. He loved to be with men, and but for the envy, the pride and the selfish rejection of those He came to save, He would have mingled with them more freely than He did and drawn them to Himself in tender intimacy. Alas, "He came unto His own (dwelling place) and His own (people) received Him not (John i: 2).

There was, however, a little circle of friends, who gladdened the heart of Jesus by their fellow-

ship and devotion. His early disciples were rude and unlettered men; but they gave Him the love His spirit craved. Later, other friends were won by Him. "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus" (John xj: 5). He was often refreshed by them and many happy hours were spent by Him in the home at Bethany. That quiet retreat was one of the bright spots in our Lord's earthly sojourn. Here He found, what to the weary is an unspeakable luxury—rest. And here He surely met what, amid the sordid multitude His spirit often craved in vain, sympathy and appreciation. "Martha received Him into her house . . . and Mary . . . sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word" (Luke x: 38, 39). And among His apostles there was one who was pre-eminently "that disciple whom Jesus loved."

These friends of Jesus, notwithstanding all their imperfections of character and dullness of spiritual vision, gave Him many joyful hours.

Nor may we forget that often in His earthly ministry a more congenial society was His. His mission was one in which all heaven was deeply interested, and angels desired to look into the mysteries that gathered around it. Angels ministered to Him in the wilderness. An angel was with Him in the garden. Is it too much to assume that often, during the strange travail of His soul He was supported and cheered by their sympathetic ministrations?

And a higher communion still was His: a source of unfailing, unalloyed happiness. Save in one supreme and awful hour, He could always say "The Father hath not left Me alone!" (John viii: 29). He knew, alas, how well, the uncertainty of human friendships; but He knew One Friend on whom He could depend! "Behold," He cried to His disciples, "the hour cometh; yea is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me" (John xvi: 32).

The happiness that Jesus always found in communion with God can be but very imperfectly understood by us; yet we are very sure that it was a happiness far transcending that ever experienced by any other being on this sinful earth. And there were supreme moments in His life, when He enjoyed such manifestations of the Father's presence as must have filled His soul with ineffable joy. When at His baptism, at His transfiguration and just before His crucifixion, at morning, at noontime and in the evening of His Day on earth, a voice was heard from heaven, proclaiming His divine sonship and authenticating His mission, His must have been "a joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter i: 8).

The deepest source of our Savior's happiness, however, was in His sinlessness. It was this indeed that fitted Him for unbroken communion with God, and this in itself shut off from His inner be-

ing many forms of suffering that only sinful souls may know. He bare our sins. He suffered their dreadful penalty. What He endured "for us men and for our salvation" no tongue can tell. But there is a peculiar form of suffering springing from conscious wrong doing that can be compared with nothing else, and we are glad to know that our blessed Lord never experienced it. He never suffered from an evil conscience. He never knew the pangs of remorse. His soul was never inflamed with unholy anger, nor embittered by jealousy, nor warped with covetous desire, nor vexed with envy, nor consumed with malice, nor puffed up with pride, nor shaken with fear, nor sullied with one single sinful thought! From His life in the manger to His death upon the cross He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. vii: 26). When we consider how directly suffering and sorrow in this life spring from personal transgression we cannot overestimate the happiness of one who was justly exempt from self-accusation and the condemnation of God's holy law.

In a Life of Lord Byron a graphic picture is presented of his career in Venice. "Humiliation, shame, a keen sense of injury, remorseful anger, and incessant fury of heart and brain were the forces that disposed Byron to depraving enjoyments." * What a contrast with the perfect peace that reigned undisturbed in our Savior's bosom!

* "The Real Byron," p. 68.

His soul was a pure fountain where springs of gladness ever rose within. He told the Samaritan woman, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life" (John iv: 14).

Surely He who could give this water to others had an unfailing supply in Himself. He had a present possession to impart when He said to His disciples, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you" (John xiv: 27).

And pre-eminently the joyful hours of Jesus were hours of service. He could truly say "I delight to do Thy will, O my God" (Ps. xl: 8). "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me" (John vi: 38).

There is satisfaction in all honest work that is well done; but what work ever brought its own sweet reward like that of our Savior's tender and loving ministry? What was apparently one of His familiar sayings is quoted by the apostle Paul in his affecting address to the elders of Ephesus. He bade them "remember the words of the Lord Jesus how He said (was wont to say) 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts xx: 35). No one ever experienced the blessedness of giving as did the Lord Jesus. His whole life was spent in benevolence. And in every work of mercy wrought by His hands His soul was refreshed and

made glad. What joy must have shone on His kindly face as He looked into the opened eyes of the man born blind at Jerusalem, of the two blind men of Capernaum and of Bartimeus and his companion in blindness at Jericho? What new strength did He feel in His heart when He healed the paralytic, rebuked the fever of Simon's wife's mother and raised up the bowed form of the woman with a spirit of infirmity!

What enjoyment He took in feeding the hungry multitudes. And how He must have rejoiced with the widow of Nain, with the household of Jairus and with the sisters at Bethany as He showed Himself to be Lord both of life and of death!

Ministering to the smitten bodies of men and raising the dead were not, however, the highest forms of service in which Jesus was engaged. These things were ever subordinate to His chief mission which was to seek and to save that which was lost.

It was when He found faith in the hearts of His hearers, saw the tears of the penitent and felt the answering love of souls His love had quickened into spiritual life, that He had His most joyful hours. In his matchless parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost boy, He teaches this great lesson. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." It is first of all a *reflected* joy the angels feel. They catch the light of a gladness on

the face of God, and are moved to rejoicing by it, as the waves of the sea are kindled into brightness by the shining of the sun. Jesus always tasted this supreme joy before His disciples shared it and came to rejoice with Him.

They wondered when they returned to the well at Samaria that their Master whom they had left weary and faint did not partake of the food they had brought. But He had found a stimulus that sunk the claims of the body out of sight. And He said "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work." The joy of soul saving was the highest joy our blessed Lord ever knew upon earth.

When the seventy returned with joy saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name," He bade them rejoice most of all that their names were written in heaven. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced (literally exulted) in spirit, and said I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him" (Luke x: 17-22). And it was in this hour of exultation and triumph, as we learn from the parallel passage in Matthew (xi: 27), that He

gave utterance to that matchless invitation that has sounded on through all the ages since His day, bringing comfort, strength and gladness to so many hearts: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi: 28). Does it not enhance the value of this priceless heritage of the weary that it was spoken, not in an hour of despondency and heaviness by the man of sorrows, but in an hour of exultation, when Jesus rejoiced in spirit as He realized to the full His oneness with God and that all power was given unto Him in heaven and in earth?

In our Savior's ministry of soul saving upon earth was fulfilled the prophecy of Zephaniah "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty: He will save; He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing" (Zeph. iii: 16, 17).

"For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross" (Heb. xii: 2) yet His joy was not all in the future.

In spite of all His acknowledged sorrows we are warranted in believing that never did sinful man on this earth live a life in which as much happiness was summed up as in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

I once heard Chaplain McCabe, afterward Bishop of the M. E. Church, relate how after giving his lecture on the "Bright Side of Life in Libbey Prison," a lady who had listened to him

came forward and thanked him, with tears in her eyes, that he had made it possible for her to believe that her boy, who had suffered in that worse than barbarous prison house, had some happy hours even there. And surely it is comforting to think that He who willingly endured for us humiliation, suffering and death was not unhappy in His exile from His Father's House: that He had the abiding springs of peace and joy in His own being; and that there were many hours when "Jesus rejoiced in spirit."

"Christ had his joys—but they were not
The joys the son of pleasure boasts—
O, no! 't was when His Spirit sought
Thy Will, Thy glory, God of hosts!
Christ had His joys—and so hath he,
Who feels His Spirit in his heart;
Who yields, O God, his all to Thee,
And loves Thy name for what Thou art!"

II

FOREGLEAMS OF REJOICING

IT is not only in the New Testament that the joyfulness of our blessed Redeemer is set before us. Before His Advent this aspect of his life-work was abundantly recognized. The Messianic Psalms are full of it. (See especially 45, 72, 110.) The harps of the prophets were not always pitched upon the minor key. Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, and he saw it and was glad. David and Isaiah strike no higher notes than when they exult in His triumphant reign; and the prophet Zephaniah, in a remarkable chapter, predicts his joyful rest in salvation. We may therefore fittingly devote this chapter of the "Joyful Hours of Jesus" to a consideration of these prophetic words: "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. . . . The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing." Zeph. iii: 14-17. This short passage is an inspired poem in itself. It is one of the many little gems of Hebrew literature. As a poem it

has all the elements of the highest art. The language is simple, yet elevated; strong and full of vitality. It has a true rhythm and resonance, which give pleasure to the ear, and a movement which sustains interest throughout.

Yet here is something more than Classic beauty, something loftier than "poetic efflatus." These old Hebrew prophets, sublime as their language often is, never aim merely at purity of diction or beauty of expression. With them poetry was an instrument, never an end in itself. It was a vehicle of lofty thought, only valued for the message it bore. It was with a divinely guided touch that the prophet's hand swept the lyre; with a mind moved by the Spirit of God that he poured forth his utterances, speaking to the heart of the Hebrew people, now with a simple lyric; now with a powerful drama; now with a solemn dirge; now with a hallelujah of triumph; but always with a religious object in view; to awaken to penitence, to inspire with assurance, to move to holy action.

Not always, indeed, was the full import of the inspired message discerned; but always, to the hearts of those prepared for it, was knowledge and grace imparted. And the prophets themselves searched diligently to know what or what manner of the time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow. 1 Pet. i: 10.

So we may listen to this voice of the past, assured that it still has its message for the Church. It is for us the Gospel is here preached. Though his language is in poetic form Zephaniah uses here "great plainness of speech." His great theme is salvation. His key-note is joy. His end is to comfort and inspire the hearts of God's people, by revealing the peculiar glories of the Messiah.

Let us note that the prophet speaks here of the Majesty of Christ. The Jehovah of the O. T. is the Jesus of the New. The God of the O. T. is the God of the New. God does not change. Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, to-day and forever. It is true that God, who is spoken of as Jehovah in the O. T., did not reveal Himself so fully as He did in the person and life of Jesus Christ; but this was not because God was less gracious in O. T. times than in N. T. times; but because the world was not ready to receive His revelations. I believe that God has always revealed Himself as fully to men as it has been possible for Him to do, without doing violence to the freedom of the human will.

It was Jehovah Jesus who, before His incarnation, spake in times past to the prophets and it is Jehovah Jesus who speaks to us more fully in the revelations of the N. T.

In this we are not claiming more for Jesus Christ than He claimed for Himself. He told the

Jews, "Before Abraham was, I Am." "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Thomas said to Him, after His resurrection, "My Lord and my God." And so far from rebuking him for idolatrous worship, Jesus replied, "Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou hast believed. Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." We believe, with Paul, that in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. That He is the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person. That He was before all things and that by Him all things consist. And with John that "all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made."

Unbelievers in every age have rejected this truth of the gospel; but belief in the Deity of Jesus Christ has a stronger hold on the world today than it has ever had in all the history of the Church. And all the signs of promise indicate to the Watchman upon the walls of Zion, that the twentieth century, more than any previous century, will rejoice to crown Him Lord of all!

The Author of salvation, then, is the Sovereign of the universe. The Creator, who, though He upholds the worlds that in untold number fill the vault of heaven, and calleth them all by name, so that not one faileth, yet fainteth not, neither is weary.

Yet the majesty of Christ is more illustriously shown in redemption than in the works of creation and providence. Redemption touches the spirit world. It exhibits our Savior as Sovereign not only over matter, but over intelligent will. It magnifies Him as One before whom every knee shall bow. "He must reign until all enemies are put under His feet."

And the cost of redemption proclaims it as the greatest of all the works of God. In creation God spake, and it was done. God said, Let there be light; and there was light. God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul! With what apparent ease were all these mighty works accomplished! By a volition,—a word,—a breath! And even if the development of the universe, as at present constituted, took untold ages, there is no sign that it cost the Creator anything. How vast the contrast when man was to be redeemed! What years of toil and suffering! What tears and groans and dying agonies! What humiliation and shame for the eternal Son of God, ending in death and the tomb! Thus may we measure the work accomplished by our blessed Redeemer and learn how much we owe! What wonder that His majestic rule commands the praises of heaven, and is echoed from the arches of the celestial Temple. "And I heard," says John, "the voice of many angels round about the throne . . . saying . . .

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing! Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" This is He who is introduced to us by Zephaniah. His title is King of kings and Lord of lords. And He rightfully claims all power in heaven and upon earth!

The next amazing thing of which Zephaniah speaks is that this mighty Sovereign is a God near and not a God afar off. Here already in the O. T. He stands revealed as an Immanuel, God with us!

The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty. The Scriptures reveal God chiefly, not as one who in the dim and far off past did great things, nor as one who in the heavens ruleth over all, but as one who is in the midst of us, with all His power, wisdom and love availing for our salvation and spiritual enrichment. What an amazing consideration! Oh, for faith to grasp it!

"And will this mighty King of glory condescend,
And will He write His name, my Savior and my Friend?
I love His name, I love His word!
Join all my powers to praise the Lord!"

It is in the Gospel that God is brought especially near to us. We see in Christ our elder Brother. He touches us at every point, save in fellowship with sin. And He is the only One who has power to relieve us of this dreadful evil. We talk as if

we believe this! But I fear that we have lost much of the impression these old Hebrew prophets had of His majesty and His power. We use His name with familiarity, sometimes with flippancy. We think more of His sympathy than we do of His exalted character. More of His love for us than of our loyalty to Him. More of the comfort of His presence than of having Him assert His crown rights in our lives. Hence too often, as Jeremiah laments, He is in the midst of us "as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save." We limit the Holy One of Israel by our unbelief. We need to remember the truth to which Zephaniah calls our attention. This mighty God is not only here in the midst of us; but He is here for a purpose. What is this purpose? Let Zephaniah answer. "He will save." This was the errand that brought the Savior to our sinful earth, and this is the end He has in view in dwelling in the midst of his people. "Call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins." Matt. i:21.

When a man of distinguished reputation, a Statesman, a Governor, a President comes to any community, great interest is always excited. People want to know at once why he came, what his errand is, and what will be the result of his coming. They do not expect men of unusual prominence and ability to make aimless moves, or to be inefficient. We need to remember that

God has a purpose in dwelling in the midst of His people. He is here to save. This is the work in which He takes delight. But sometimes His skill is baffled by the rejection of those who need Him most. Sometimes a medical missionary comes to a plague stricken community, only to find that few will accept his remedies. Such is Christ's position in the midst of us. He is a kind Physician. He is here to save! He is able to save unto the uttermost. And yet He saves only those who are willing to be saved. God saves no man against his own will. There are some things every sinner must do who finds salvation. He must realize his guilt and his helplessness. He must acknowledge his sin. He must repent. He must have faith in God. He must open his heart to the Gospel. He must commit the keeping of his soul to Christ in well doing. God helps every soul to do all these things, who looks to Him in prayer for the gracious ability to do them; but no one who refuses to allow God's power to work thus within him can find salvation.

Yet HE WILL SAVE! There are always some who are willing to receive the Savior. It was so when He was upon the earth. Rejected at Gadara, He was welcomed on the other side of the Lake, where the people were all waiting for Him. Driven out of Judea, He made for Himself a welcome at Jacob's well. With no shelter in Jerusalem, He found a home in Bethany.

It is so still! HE WILL SAVE! He is carrying on His work in many hearts, and precious souls will yet be won to Him, who have not yet acknowledged His power. What a cheering assurance is this for those who love to see the Savior honored; but who have almost come to believe that it is useless to pray any longer for those for whose salvation they long! The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty. He will save!

But Zephaniah calls upon us to consider a greater wonder still. . . . Jehovah's complacency in salvation. "He will rejoice over thee with joy: He will rest in His love. He will joy over thee with singing."

There is satisfaction in the breast of every true workman, when success crowns his labors. Even the gloomy Carlyle tells us that he finished his "unutterable book," Frederick the Great, with a "kind of solemn thankfulness." Bernard Palissey was thrilled with gladness when, after 16 years struggling with suffering and poverty, he wrested from nature and art the secret of the manufacture of enameled pottery. Who can describe the emotions of Michael Angelo when "the hand that gilded Peter's dome" put the finishing touches on that immortal work! Who can describe the rapture of Wilberforce when he saw Britain free from the iniquity of the slave trade; or of Abraham Lincoln, when he penned the Emancipation Proclamation!

Jesus Christ carried out the great work of Redemption single handed. No one shared with Him its labors, its anxieties, its sufferings, its penalty. Yet He left nothing undone to secure a perfect salvation for all His people. When He left the earth, He could say to the Father, "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." What wonder that He should take complacent satisfaction in a work so vast, so unique, so glorious, so full of far reaching results, not only to this little earth, but to the whole universe of God and to His own Mediatorial glory! If the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy when God laid the foundations of the earth; and He who rested from His labors said, "Behold, it is very good," what must have been the joy among the angels when the great Captain of our salvation ascended from the earth, which had been at once the scene of His sufferings and of His triumph, "leading captivity captive and giving gifts to men"!

The work of redemption was in one sense complete when Jesus left the earth; for the atonement had been made, but, in another sense, it is a work He is carrying on still, as He applies the remedies of the Gospel to the hearts of men. He is still in the midst of us mighty to save, and His heart goes out in love and compassion for the perishing. And there is nothing that so satisfies the Savior

now, after the travail of His soul in the days of His flesh, as to see the hearts of men melting into tenderness under the warm rays of His infinite love.

What an expression is this of Zephaniah, "He will rest in His love"! There was nothing that so rested and refreshed the Savior, when He was upon the earth, as the faith of the needy, the tears of the penitent, the prayers of the perishing. Once, when worn out with toil, He withdrew to a desert place for rest; but, when the multitude followed Him, His compassions were stirred, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, and He began to teach them many things. He forgot His weariness when He found their hearts were restless and seeking rest in Him. He was both weary and hungry when He sat on Jacob's well; but soon He rested in His love when the Samaritan woman began to drink in the water of life; and He said to His returning and wondering disciples, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." How the Savior rested in His love when the woman that was a sinner bathed His feet with her tears! How His spirit was refreshed as Mary sat at His feet and heard His words! And what rest His weary soul had when the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us through Thy name!" "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, . . . all things are delivered unto me of my Father." And what wonder that,

in the exuberance of His love He should, at this time, utter that matchless invitation that has gone ringing down the ages: "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" ! It was not only for the sake of the lost that salvation came to a Nicodemus, to a Zaccheus, to a dying thief. The Savior needed these resting places in His weary way, that He might not fail nor be discouraged till He had set judgment in the earth (Isa. xlii:4). An angel strengthened Him in the garden; but on the cross, in the hour of His deeper agony, it sufficed that He rescued from the very jaws of death one of the vilest of our race, that He might thus rest in His love; and, in His dying moments, reveal the fulness of His salvation by erecting close to Calvary, where all eyes that looked to Him henceforth must see it, a monument of grace.

The Savior was the "Man of sorrows"; but we think too little of the deep undercurrent of peace that flowed always through His soul and of the satisfaction He took in His redeeming work. "For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame."

Far be it from us to belittle the sufferings of the Savior of men. That such a being should suffer for us at all, how amazing, how condescending, how infinitely kind! All the elements that enter into the case increase the wonder that He

should die. His dignity, His knowledge of all that was before Him, His entire willingness to lay down His life, the ill-desert of those for whom He suffered, . . . these and other things pile up wonder upon wonder, into which angels desire to look. But with it all let us remember what He has so impressively taught us, that time is not eternity. His sufferings were but as a ripple on the calm ocean of His endless life; as one painful breathing in the bosom of His immortal being; as one fleeting cloud in the infinite azure of His eternal day. Ever since He left the earth He has been resting in His love. Isaiah declares, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." Will you let the loving Savior rest in your bosom, O impenitent soul, after His weary way on the earth, seeking to save, or will He find no room in your heart for Him, as when He drew His first breath there was no room for Him at the Inn?

"He will rest in His love!" In the margin the reading is "He will be silent in His love." There are times when love finds its truest expression in silence. The mother, bending over her babe at night; the watcher, hailing in the peaceful slumber of her patient the returning tides of life that are bringing a loved one back to health and strength; the wife, clasping in her arms the husband who has returned from many dangers on the battle-field or on the sea; the parents, welcoming to their

home and to their covenant God a wandering but penitent son or daughter, these do not love the less because they are silent in their love. Sometimes silence is more eloquent than speech. Sometimes the heart is too full for utterance. Sometimes " the lips can only tremble with the joys they cannot speak " ! How eloquently does the Savior speak to you of His love when He whispers it only in the " still small voice " ! Let this be the prayer of every one of us: " Rest, blessed Savior, in my bosom, silent in Thy love; only let me, as it were, feel the pressure of Thy loving hand upon me that I may know Thou art there; make me conscious, by Thy Spirit, of Thy presence; and let everything that might disturb Thy perfect rest within me be driven from my breast;—then, and then only, shall my soul find perfect rest in Thee! "

And here I might well end. But the prophet does not thus end his inspired poem. He strikes a higher note, and bids all heaven join the chorus, as he tells how the Lord brings home His own. The rest the Redeemer enjoys with His people on earth is imperfect and transient. There remaineth a rest for Him, as well as for them,—an eternal Sabbath of joy. " The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save; He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing." It is because God rejoices in Zion that Zion is summoned to rejoice in God.

The joy in the presence of the angels is the joy of Jehovah Jesus, and that joy will swell out into glad triumph through all the ages to come as "the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. xxv: 10). "And His rest shall be glorious!" (Isa. xl: 10).

Bunyan, at the close of his matchless Allegory, after describing how Christian and Hopeful came up to the gates of the celestial Zion, says, "Then I saw in my dream that all the bells of the city rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them, 'Enter ye into the joy of your Lord.'" What will be the jubilation when the last member of the redeemed host shall have crossed the flood, and we meet in the New Jerusalem to crown Him Lord of all!

"The mighty God! Here shalt thou find thy rest,
O weary one! There is naught else to know,
Naught else to seek—here thou may'st cease thy quest.
Give thyself up. He leads where thou shalt go.

The changeless God! Into thy troubled life
Steals strange, sweet peace; the pride that drove thee on,
The hot ambition and the selfish strife
That made thy misery, like mists are gone."

III

A GLADDENING LIFE-WORK

THE whole history of Jesus Christ is wrapped up in the significant words of Peter in the house of Cornelius, when he speaks of Him as one "who went about doing good." All else that is recorded of Him is but an expansion of this general statement. Biography at its best is but a fragment. The most voluminous record of any man's life must leave untouched the bulk of all that he has said and done. Mr. Crocker, the laborious editor of Boswell's Johnson, calls attention in his preface to the fact that "a little less than the one hundredth part of Dr. Johnson's life occupies about one half of Boswell's work of 2528 pages." Yet few will dispute Macaulay's verdict that "Boswell is the first of biographers."

Not only would it be impossible for any historian to ascertain all the incidents that transpired in the lifetime of his hero, but the very end of his work would be defeated by such an elaboration. The mind of the reader would be overwhelmed by the mass of details. The most faithful and successful biographer, therefore, is he who skillfully seizes upon salient points that reveal

character, or have a marked effect upon the individual himself or upon society. How imperfect is our knowledge of the whole life of Julius Caesar, of Socrates, of Peter the Great, of Martin Luther! And yet there can be little question that the world has a truer conception of the genius and character of these men than it would have if the great gaps that yawn in the narratives of their childhood, their youth, their manhood were all filled up with a minute account of every day's experiences.

This law of selection, which governs all history, applies to the history of Him who was the Life and the Light of men. We have, as has been remarked, but one incident, viz., the scene in the Temple, recorded of the first thirty years of His life. And of the three years of His active ministry comparatively few incidents and discourses are recorded. John truly says, "There were also many other things that Jesus did." Yet, while the history of Jesus, as given in the Gospels, is but a fragment, it represents the whole life as no fragment, however voluminous, could represent the life of any mere man. Who shall say that there were not incidents in the unrecorded years of this wise man that if made known would make us deplore his folly? of this good man that would make us shudder at his wrong doing? of this brave man that would awaken our wonder at his cowardice? So that, while we may form our estimate of human

character by fragmentary biography, we dare not affirm that it is faultless, or that the same principles of wisdom, benevolence or truth we have had called to our attention characterized the hero at all times.

Here, however, the life of Jesus Christ differs from that of any mere man. We have general statements made of His life in the flesh; and we know that they are absolutely infallible, and apply to His whole career, from His birth in Bethlehem to His death upon the cross. Such is that embodied in the statement that He went about doing good.

Though the veil that hides the first 30 years of His life is but once lifted, we know that there is nothing hidden behind it that we would be sorry to learn!

No words of disrespect to His parents ever sprung from His lips. No bursts of sinful anger ever perturbed His tranquil spirit, or sent their fiery arrows into the bosoms of His childhood friends. No thought of impurity ever scorched His soul. No deceit ever warped His sincere and upright purpose. In all things, and at all times, He was "holy, harmless, undefiled." His innocence was spotless. His whole spiritual being was an unsullied fountain; hence it would give forth only pure and wholesome waters. He was incarnate goodness; hence "He went about doing good."

The great mission of Jesus Christ to earth was to secure the salvation of sinners; but there were subordinate ends accomplished of which we may not lose sight. If we remember His death, we must also study His life. If we emphasize His sufferings, we must also recognize His obedience. If we look for peace to His atonement, we must look for guidance to His example.

Let us remark, then, of the benevolence of Jesus, that it was *Positive*. If there has ever been such a thing as a negative character, His was not one. His life was spent not merely in avoiding evil, but in doing good. His was an active usefulness. He *went about* doing good. Cloistered virtue has had its pretenders and its advocates; but it cannot point to the Son of man as its founder or its exponent. He was no recluse. He was not even retiring in temper, nor stern of spirit, like John the Baptist. He came to seek and to save that which was lost; and He mingled freely among men, that He might fulfill His ministry. Not that He might gratify a sensual appetite, but that He might reach the people in their homes, "the Son of Man came eating and drinking."

He confined Himself to no class in society, but sought to help men of every condition and circumstance into a higher and purer atmosphere. He ate at the tables of the rich; He became known as the friend of publicans and sinners.

When we consider the obstacles that lay in His pathway we are more and more impressed with the earnestness of His active life. We are apt to think solely of His divinity, and to make that the ready solution of every difficulty; but we need to remember that, while He was divine, He was also a man, tempted in all points like as we are. Looking upon Him in His humanity,—and thus we must view Him, if we would understand the trials through which He pressed forward in His benevolent efforts,—we see discouragements that would have proved appalling to any but His manly character. He aimed at universal benevolence,—yet He was a *young* man, poverty-stricken, the citizen of a city accounted mean. He had no influential friends to introduce Him to society, or to put Him into position where He might apply the gifts with which He was endowed. The Jewish Hierarchy, proud, influential, wealthy, were from the first His enemies. Rome was hostile to the Jewish religion, and to Him, whom it regarded as only one of its teachers. The masses, whom He most easily reached, were blinded with prejudice, filled with sensual desires, warped with low and ignoble purposes. No man ever had a more gloomy prospect before him than Jesus of Nazareth had, from a human standpoint, when He went forth from His humble Galilean home on His unselfish errand to a world smitten and bleeding under the curse of sin.

Considered simply in the blessings He conferred upon humanity, by His discourses and His works, the life of Jesus upon the earth was one of complete success, though to many onlookers it seemed to be spent to no purpose and to go out in failure. While we are far enough from placing this perfect life on a level with any other of which history gives us any record, we may say of it, what is often said of the lives of great men, that it deserves to be studied because of its success. No measure of success was ever attained without a careful study of those elements that are essential to it,—and it is pre-eminently true of the life of Jesus that it was successful, in the highest sense, because of His care to conform Himself to certain principles that underlie God's working always, and must underlie man's, if he would achieve any worthy end. As He is our Exemplar, we should be more careful to inquire by what methods He went about His Father's business.

First, we recognize, as we read the Gospels, that He had definite plans of usefulness, of which He never lost sight. His was not a restless or aimless existence. He did not wander about the country, doing only such good as came to His hand. He did not spend an hour's time, waiting for something to turn up. His work was well systematized and arranged, and everything he did was timely. He called His disciples, instructed them and sent them out, with a view to carrying on the great

work He had planned, in all its details,—and His missionary tours through Judea and Galilee were systematically arranged, so as to give Him readiest access to those whom it was most needful that He should reach. If he must needs go through Samaria, there was likewise a needs be that constrained Him to enter into Capernaum, into Jericho, into Jerusalem.

Again, His activity was unremitting. He lost no precious time. He squandered no golden hours in ease and pleasure seeking. Even His seasons of devotion were chosen with a view to leaving time for contact with men, after communion with God.

> "Cold mountains and the midnight air
> Witnessed the fervor of his prayer."

He rose up a great while before day to go into a solitary place to pray. More than once, perhaps, He continued all night in prayer to God. And these seasons of prayer were followed by the most intelligent, persistent and earnest efforts in well doing.

Again, His activity was comprehensive in its scope. It embraced contact with individuals, as well as with masses of men. He whose time was short upon the earth, and infinitely precious, could discourse at length with a poor, sinful woman, that He might disclose to her, and then heal, the plague spot of her heart,—could listen patiently to

the doubts and spiritual perplexities of a Master in Israel, and apply His instruction to resolve them,—could seek out a solitary blind man, whom He had healed, that He might complete the cure His grace had begun by opening his spiritual eyes,—could tarry with the woman taken in adultery when all others had withdrawn that He might say to her, "Go, and sin no more."

The variety of method employed by Jesus is another proof of the comprehensive character of His benevolence. Sometimes by the ready word of hearty sympathy, He revealed His kinship to humanity and showed how He could be touched with the feeling of its infirmity. Sometimes by the exercise of healing power He showed that He had more than pity to offer.—And His miracles of healing embraced diseases of all sorts. Sometimes by the supply of daily need He showed His compassion on the perishing, as when He fed the multitude in the desert and His disciples by the shore of the sea.

His miracles were not merely attestations of His divinity; they were wonders of beneficence, designed to reveal the love of His heart and to banish sorrow and suffering from those who were afflicted.

He rejoiced in spirit as He applied to His ministry the prophecy of Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because He hath sent Me to heal the broken hearted." It gave Him joy

to lighten the burdens of others. There were gleams of sunlight upon the dark pathway of the man of sorrows as He saw the result of His ministry of love in alleviating sufferings of body and of mind. Who shall say that His spirit did not take exquisite satisfaction in the joy of the widow of Nain,—in the gratitude of Bartimeus,—in the restored happiness of the stricken household of Bethany?

Had His miracles been wrought solely to attest His divinity, they might have been of a different character; prodigies of the supernatural merely, without relation to mankind;—or even miracles of judgment. But the smiting of the barren fig tree is the only miracle that can be pronounced one of judgment; and even this had its lessons of mercy for His disciples. While in every other wonder of His hands may be traced designs of beneficence for all who witnessed it, and especially for those directly affected by it. He took upon Himself our nature that He might heal its diseases. What an instructive account of His ministry is that He Himself renders to the disciples of John.—"The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the Gospel preached to them; and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me" (Matt. xi: 5, 6). Matthew says, "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom,

and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (iv: 23).

It is worthy of consideration *how* He went about. Not in an easy coach, on a smooth and level road, supplied with all the modern appliances of comfort. We have only one instance of His riding in any way;—and that was when He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem upon an ass. He went afoot, over the burning sands and under the hot sun of Syria. Often, as when He reached Jacob's well, He was hungry and thirsty. Often He was footsore and weary. Often did the Son of man have not where to lay His head.

What an affecting picture is that recorded in the last verse of the 7th, taken in connection with the first verse of the 8th chapter of John's Gospel, when we supply, with the R.V. the important word "*but,*" which is omitted in the A.V. The sentence thus restored ends the evangelist's description of a day of busy toil,—"And every man went unto his own house; but Jesus went unto the mount of Olives." He who went about doing good was perhaps the only one in that crowded city of Jerusalem who had that night "not where to lay His head." Gethsemane, where He oft times resorted, was as much His home as any spot on earth.

While we are considering the comprehensive character of His teaching we must not forget how important a part His teaching was of it; and how

wonderfully adapted was His instruction to the minds of His hearers;—how varied, how simple, yet how lofty.

He spake the word to the multitude as they were able to bear it. He taught gratuitously a better wisdom than the Jewish or Gentile schools offered at a price. His teaching was plain, and designed to be understood by every willing mind. His parables were wonderful. His maxims were direct and practical, though profound. While such tenderness and love breathed in his very tones that men wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth.

It was weary work, this teaching. Few men who live by manual labor have any conception of the exhaustion caused by mental toil. They who work so hard in the fields and in the shops often think that the lawyer, the professor, the preacher, must have an easy time of it. But there is no weariness like brain weariness; and the Great Teacher was not exempt from the peculiar suffering which nature endures when the mental faculties have been overtaxed.

Let those who have worn themselves out, almost to nervous prostration, under the mental strain of Day School, Sunday School or Pulpit work, remember that He who went about doing good can be touched with a feeling of their infirmities.

Again, consider how practical was the benevolence of Jesus.

He sought to bless men in the common walks of life. He taught a homely piety. He inculcated virtues that were calculated to make men better and happier in the spheres where they were found. He counseled trust in Providence. He eased many weary hearts of their self-imposed burdens, as He bade them take no anxious thought for to-morrow. He unfolded the treasures of contentment. He showed how the smallest service might be made kingly, and how even a cup of cold water, given in love, would be followed by a glorious reward.

And how *timely* were His compassions! When Jairus' daughter had been restored to life, and all were so astonished at the miracle as to be helpless or forgetful of a very needful ministration, He did not lose sight of the benevolence of daily life, in the great wonder He had wrought. "He commanded that something be given her to eat."

Oh, idle dreamer of good deeds! You who are always panting for some great mission,—longing for some other position in which to serve,—painting to your fancy a pleasing picture of your usefulness in doing good in some far off field, or among those who will understand you always and appreciate your worth; but who, while you build these airy castles of benevolent design, are overlooking a thousand opportunities of lightening the hearts of others in your home and in your work day circle,—who, with all your lofty desire to be a blessing somewhere else, or at some far off time, can be un-

just, ungenerous, impatient, self-willed, regardless of the pain you inflict upon those nearest to you, remember the daily self-denial and homely, practical benevolence of Him who went about doing good, and GO AND DO THOU LIKEWISE.

And this leads us to our final thought. In the teachings and works of Jesus of Nazareth are embedded the seeds of beneficence for all after time. His example is not merely to be wondered at, but to be imitated. We have dwelt upon the gifts of His humanity chiefly, for in these only is He our pattern. Not merely unto salvation, but to patient continuance in well doing, does His voice summon us, saying,—"FOLLOW THOU ME!" Howard heard that call, and left his princely country seat to spend his life among the dungeons and pest houses of Europe. Mrs. Fry heard it, and the prisoners of Newgate were cheered in their despair. Wilberforce heard it, and for 20 years his fortune and his energies were devoted, amid untold opposition and insult, to the emancipation of the slave. Florence Nightingale, Clara Barton, Edith Cavell heard it, and loved not their lives unto death. Brainard, Judson, Elliot, Williams, Livingston, Paton and a growing multitude of like-minded heroes heard it; and in the ends of the earth, and among savage men, they went about doing good. All missionary operations are the outgrowth of the Gospel. Red Cross Relief, Y. M. C. A. activities in the trenches and in the camps, find in Jesus of

Nazareth their inspiration and their support. Hospitals, asylums, and varied public charities, are becoming world-wide, as His spirit asserts its power over the hearts of men. Woman in Gospel lands takes her God-given place, as man's choicest gift from heaven, and finds her ample sphere, not in noisy clamoring for rights, however legitimate, but in the home, where none may have such far-reaching and lasting power for good, and in the Church of the living God, where her help is increasingly exerted in manifold and loving ministrations.

Jesus of Nazareth has left the earth; but His footsteps remain in it, and in them we may all tread to the end of life. Let those who covet earth's empty honors obtain their baubles; let those who enjoy the satisfaction of sinful pleasures drink their fill; but let every follower of Jesus realize that he can win for himself no higher meed of praise, can attain to no better reward, than to have it said of him at the last, as it was said of his Master and Lord, "He went about doing good."

Hold up thy mirror to the sun,
 And thou shalt need an eagle's gaze,
So perfectly the polish'd stone
 Gives back the glory of his rays;

Turn it, and it shall paint as true
 The soft green of the vernal earth,
And each small flower of bashful hue,
 That closest hides its lowly birth.

Our mirror is a blessed book,
 Where, out from each illumined page
We see one glorious Image look
 All eyes to dazzle and engage.

The Son of God; and that indeed
 We see him as He is, we know,
Since in the same bright glass we read
 The very life of things below.

KEBLE.

IV

JOY AT THE WELL-SIDE

WHEN Jesus told the Samaritan woman of the living fountain within the heart, springing up into everlasting life, she cried out in rapture, "Give me this water!" We readily recognize her misconception; but her language is none the less appropriate to express our spiritual needs. Jesus spoke to her of living water. He speaks more plainly to us. She mistook his meaning. We cannot well do so. The blessings of the Gospel are so frequently symbolized in the Scriptures under the figure of water that our minds have become thoroughly familiar with the imagery. When Isaiah cries, "with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation"; when Jeremiah rebukes his people for forsaking the fountain of living waters; when Zechariah prophesies of a "fountain opened to the house of David . . . for sin and for uncleanness"; when Jesus says, "if any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink;" and when the final invitation sounds from the sacred oracles, "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," the same thing is meant, the grace of

God in Christ, which, like a hidden well, springs up in the hearts of believers into everlasting life.

It is a blessed day for the soul when this conscious thirst for spiritual things takes possession of it. Man does not naturally possess it, though he thirsts from the earliest years of his experience. He is above all things a creature of desire. He reaches out in every possible direction for something to stay the ardent longing of his spirit; but though his mind is capable of being entertained in an endless variety of pursuits, there is absolutely nothing of an earthly nature that will long satisfy his wants. "Who will show us any good?" is the feverish cry of the restless soul, as it turns from one side to another, tasting the unsatisfying waters of broken cisterns. Now Christ offers Himself to the thirsting soul, not that he may stamp out of the heart all its deep yearnings after happiness and bid it thirst no more at all. The religion of Jesus is not designed to make men dull and senseless, without emotion or aspiration;—lifeless clods instead of living, longing, immortal beings. But it comes into the heart to change the current of these deep desires, while it purifies and intensifies them. It stays the earthly thirst, while it stimulates the heavenly. "He that drinketh of this water," says Jesus, referring to the water of Jacob's well, "shall thirst again,"—and the same is true of all those earthly things with which men seek to slake the spirit's longings. Like the waters of the sea, the

streams of worldly pleasure only intensify the burning thirst of him who quaffs them. "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him," continues the Savior, "shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." The soul still thirsts after it has turned to Christ; but it thirsts at the Fountain, where its ever increasing needs may be continually and abundantly satisfied.

It is a bitter thing to thirst without having the refreshing waters that the parched lips desire; but thirst is a boon when we have the means of satisfying it. So fond of the waters of the Nile are the Arabs that they are said to eat salt that their thirst may be stimulated to demand larger and larger draughts. But no Bedouin is so extravagant in his fondness for the waters of this famous river that he will venture thus to whet his thirst when buried in the heart of the desert.

But as the world's great Physician represses the thirst of His sin-sick patients for those delights that can never be obtained in their fulness, and that fail to satisfy, He increases their longing for the waters of life.

Dr. Chalmers has a striking sermon on the "expulsive power of a new affection." The mind absorbed in a new passion forgets its former joys, and even its former sorrows. Isaac mourned for Sarah, his mother; but when he found Rebekah the record is "She became his wife and he loved her;

and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." If the religion of Jesus did not offer to the soul better things than it dispossesses it of, it would appeal to it in vain. If there was truth at the bottom of the bungling explanation of the old philosophers of physical science that "Nature abhors a vacuum," it is no less true of the human heart. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John ii: 15). Hence our Savior has said, "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matt. v: 6).

The blessedness of attaining a thirst for spiritual things is two-fold. First, it centers the affections and desires upon one object. It presents Christ as a never failing source of supply. It bids the soul, weary in its vain quest for satisfaction in ten thousand different directions find happiness and rest in Him; and, secondly, it teaches it to find in Him a never failing source of satisfaction. The soul may thirst after Him to all eternity; its longings shall be satisfied, moment by moment.

What the heavenly thirst after Christ may be we do not know; but we can analyze our present desires after Him and recognize the elements that enter into our spiritual thirst. We know what it is our souls must have. They need pardon; and Jesus only can say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." They need support; and He says, "My grace is sufficient for thee." They need purification; and

the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." They need companionship; and He says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." . . . "Lo, I am with you alway." There is absolutely no use to which natural waters may be applied which may not find some spiritual analogy in the waters of salvation. The water that Christ gives satisfies the thirst of the soul; it refreshes the drooping spirit; it cleanses its sin-stains; it heals its sicknesses; it beautifies it with a glory not its own; it reclaims it from barrenness and makes it to bring forth, in goodly clusters, the fruits of the Spirit; it flows freely, abundantly, unceasingly, within the heart, springing up into everlasting life.

"Plenteous grace with Thee is found;
Grace to pardon all my sin.
Let the healing streams abound;
Make and keep me pure within.
Thou of life the Fountain art;
Freely let me take of Thee;
Spring Thou up within my heart;
Rise to all eternity!"

Well may every thirsting soul cry, "Give me this water."

Again, the woman's prayer is appropriate, in that it is addressed to the right Person. To the woman of Samaria, the stranger who sat on Jacob's well gave little promise in His appearance of conferring any benefit upon her. What strange contrasts appear in Him as we view Him sitting on the

well-curb at Sychar! He is weary; yet He promises rest to all who are weary and heavy laden. He thirsts; yet He promises to satisfy the thirst of all who will receive the living water from Him. He asks for a drink of water; yet He offers to give water that no one else can give. He hungers; yet He has meat to eat of which no one knows but He. He is an obscure, unknown, poverty-stricken man; yet greater than the patriarch who had dug this well, and whose name was venerated above all others in this region of Samaria. Yet we, who have been instructed in the Gospel, have found the solution of all these paradoxes. This stranger, unknown, unrevealed as yet to the Samaritan woman, is no stranger to us. His claims have been vindicated ten thousand times. He is able to fulfill all these gracious promises, and He is as willing as He is mighty to save. Jesus alone can impart this water of life. Christian believers may themselves be filled with divine grace; but they have no power to bestow it upon others. The wise virgins had no oil to spare for their foolish sisters. And Christ will pour forth the refreshing streams from the wells of salvation only to him who with a deep sense of his spirit's thirst cries out to Him, "Give me this water."

A few years ago I visited a great cathedral in the city of Montreal. It was fitted with the usual appliances of Romish worship. Among other things, I noticed the apartments built around

the sides of the room; little closets, each intended for a separate priest, who there heard confession of sins, and granted so-called absolution. But, over one of these confessionals there was a notice that the priest who usually officiated there was absent. How disappointing to the crowds who were accustomed to come to this place of supposed sanctity to be informed that the confessor was away from home, and that they must therefore seek some other priest to give them spiritual relief; or must wait until their favorite confessor returned! But what suppliant ever approached the Mercy Seat, where Jesus waits to bless, and read such words as these? Rather, the words there recorded are: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Rev. xxxi:6). "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (Isa. iv:1).

John says of his vision of heavenly things, "He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. xxii:1). The blessings of the Gospel come from a lofty source; but while the throne of God stands that river shall flow on for the refreshment and cleansing of all the weary and sin-stained sons of men. It is with us as with Israel in the desert, "for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. x:4). We need never fear that like the stream of Cherith the waters shall fail.

Every morning as we refresh our spirits with a Scripture promise and "with joy draw waters out of the wells of salvation," or drink at the well-spring of prayer, we find the stream undiminished and its life-giving, healing virtues unimpaired. "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii: 17).

Again, the language of the woman expresses personal need. "Give me this water." The cry of thirst is always personal; though it need not be selfish. Sir Philip Sydney refused the cup that a dying comrade needed more than he; but though his great heart throbbed with joy in the pleasure of his magnanimous purpose, the fever burned none the less fiercely in his own veins and his parched lips still craved the draught they so nobly sent from them. The woman of Samaria knew that in the city there were many to whom the gift of an unfailing well would be as great a boon as to herself. But she felt her own need to be pressing; for the sore of her wretched life had been opened afresh; and out of a desolate heart that knew its own bitterness, though it comprehended as yet but blindly the manner of relief promised by this mysterious Stranger, she cried, "Give me this water, that I thirst not." It was not with her as with the dying hero of the battle-field or with the famine-stricken inmates of a besieged fortress. She did not de-

prive others of their share of a scanty supply by asking water first for herself. The blessings of the Gospel are for them that thirst; and they only can be filled who cry out to Christ, in conscious dependence and longing, "Give me this water!" It is only when He has been found, by personal experience, to satisfy all the deep wants of the soul, that we can hasten to others and say, "Come, see a man that told me all that ever I did."

> "His blood can make the foulest clean;
> His blood availed for me."

What contrasts are suggested between the water of Jacob's well and the water of life! The water of the well lay far beneath the surface. It must be drawn up one hundred and fifty feet, by painful effort. The living water springs up within, a perpetual fountain, spontaneous and fresh, ever ready for the thirsty lips. The water of the well was without the city. Those who had need must go out to draw it; as man is ever going out of himself for happiness. The living water is in the heart. He who has it shall be satisfied in his own spirit; for "the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke xvii: 21). The water of the well would one day cease to flow. It is to-day choked up with stones and débris; the object of curiosity to the inquiring traveller in Palestine, but affording no supply to those who thirst, as they peer into its dark and forbidden depths. The living water is eternal. Time

does not change its freshness, its purity or its constant flow; and it will spring up within

> "While life and breath and being last,
> Or immortality endures!"

The living water is satisfying. "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again." How true we have found it of all the waters of earth! But, in the failure of every earthly thing, what a boon to have a satisfying portion;—the water of life, true religion in the soul, the love of God in the heart, Christ within! "Give me this water!"

We have read of a caravan that was lost in the desert. Men were sent out in every direction, seeking for water. At length, after long searching, one lighted upon a spring. There, in abundance, was the precious element, for lack of which many were dying. But, was it the bitter water of the desert, brackish and salt; or was it pure and life giving? The finder does not stay long to speculate. The fever burns in his veins. His parched lips will hardly permit him to proclaim his discovery. He stoops and drinks, and then, with invigorated frame and joyful heart, he hastens back to the perishing, crying, "Water, water, enough for all; come and drink!"

Come, thirsting spirit at once to Christ! Utter the woman's prayer, with all the earnestness your deep need demands, "Give me this water!" And then, like the woman of Samaria, let your feet be

swift to bear to others the glad tidings of salvation; "Come and see!" . . . "Is not this the Christ?" (John iv: 29).

"If thou knewest, longing soul,
The Gift that God has given;
How fully would thy thirst for joy
Be satisfied from heaven.

If thou knewest, guilty soul,
That, sinful as thou art,
Compassion fills His soul for thee,
And tenderness His heart.

He has these living waters still.
He offers them to you.
Drink; for these springs are ever fresh;
These wells of mercy new."

V

FOOD THAT SATISFIES

WHEN the returning disciples urged their Master to eat of the provisions they had obtained in the city of Sychar, He told them, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. . . . My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work."

The lofty character of this reply will be better understood if we remember two things. First, the claims of his body were as yet unsatisfied. He came to the well of Sychar at noontide. The hot sun of Syria was, no doubt, pouring down its fiercest rays. He was weary with His journey, hungry from His long fast and burning with the thirst which only travellers in lands poorly watered can know. The passing hours since His disciples had left Him to buy meat in the city had not brought relief to either His hunger or His thirst. No one had been with Him, save the woman of Samaria. She had no meat to offer Him, and it does not appear that she gave Him to drink, even after He had offered her living water. This is the only recorded request that Jesus made for bodily

relief of any kind during His active ministry, and we are not told that it was granted.

The second fact that we need to consider is that our Lord was not an ascetic. He did not ignore the wants of the body, nor strive to stamp out its normal appetites. He was neither gluttonous nor a wine-bibber; but, notwithstanding, "The Son of man came eating and drinking." His example gave sanction to the maxim His great apostle has left us, Every creature of God is good, if received with thanksgiving. He was present at a marriage ceremony and furnished wine for the guests. He accepted an invitation to a great feast, where He ate and drank with publicans and sinners.

It was not, then, either because our Savior had broken His long fast or that He had any scruples about satisfying His hunger that He replied to His disciples, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." "Man shall not live by bread alone" had been the words of Jesus to the tempter in the desert. There He had pointed to the word of God as food for the soul. Here He speaks of the service of obedience as soul satisfying. Hunger and thirst were for the time ignored, because the Son of man had experienced the expulsive power of a stronger appetite. The spiritual conquests before him overcame the clamors of the body.

Absorption in some favorite pursuit has often deadened the sensibilities of men to the claims of the body.

When the great painting in the rotunda of the Capitol at Washington was under way, the artist often forgot his dinner which was daily placed near him. John Opie, when a lad, used to rise at three o'clock in the morning, denying his body rest, that he might draw sketches with chalk and charcoal. James Ferguson, when a poor boy, unknown to fame, felt the same ruling spirit. Often, after toiling all day, though he was of feeble frame, he would go out at night into the fields, with a blanket about him and a lighted candle and there, lying on his back, pursue for long hours the movements of the heavenly bodies, stretching a thread with small beads upon it between his eye and the stars that he might measure their apparent distances from one another. The claims of the body were forgotten, for the spirit was in rapture. David Livingstone, buried in the heart of Africa, sick and weary with his many years of exploration refused, when relief came, to go home to all the comforts of civilized life. He was willing to sacrifice himself, if he might heal the sore spot of a sin-smitten world.

To all who take true views of human life, the body is a slave, and not the master. The spirit must have dominion, if the man is to achieve any worthy end in life. The body is only the instrument through which the immortal part of man does his work; and often the absorption of the soul in a great work forbids the indulgence of the appetites. The master has food to eat the servant

knows not of. The body must wait. Abraham's servant would not eat, until he had told his errand. Samuel would not sit down to meat until he had anointed David. With Jesus this dominion of the spirit was absolute: and the food his soul feasted upon was the loftiest of all service and the most congenial to his heart. It was hunger of spirit that brought him from heaven to earth. He could truly say, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart."

He came to do His Father's will; yet so perfectly were He and His Father one that the love that sent and the love that brought were equal. Both were infinite. He did the Father's will when the worlds were made by Him yet creation's wide domain did not satisfy a Savior's love. Before His incarnation He rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth and His delights were with the sons of men (Prov. viii: 31). Though the stars of a universe lay scattered like diamonds upon the robe of night, the Lord of glory found not among them all the one treasure most dear to His heart. A lost world was wandering from its place into the blackness of darkness, and to go after it and restore it was the mission he assumed.

The motive power that impelled Him forward in every step of His way was love. Man, the one prodigal of the great family of God, must be restored. The ninety and nine of the heavenly fold were as dear as ever to the heart of Infinite Love;

but the one that had strayed filled that heart with solicitude, and nothing could so stir it as the answering call of the sheep He had lost.

Devotion to toil is not enough in itself to stamp man's character with nobility. Some men neglect the appetites of the body, only to feed the more imperious appetites of the spirit in pride, avarice or ambition. Some men wrap themselves in toilsome labors only to escape painful memories. But Jesus Christ entered upon His life-work under the impulse of motives known only to infinite love. The work of winning souls was His meat and His drink. His spirit had just been refreshed as it rejoiced over the woman of Samaria, now won to repentance; and hungered for the more ample feast of a city filled with sinners whose souls were just as precious as was hers. This pleasure loving woman was the first fruits of His mission to Sychar, and the fields white to the harvest toward which He pointed His wondering disciples were not those of nature but of grace. Perhaps by this time the company of Samaritans was in sight, answering the call of the woman who said to them: "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did." "They went out of the city," we are told, "and came unto Him." "The divine fisher of men has just felt the tugging of a vigorous life upon His line, and as the prize is secured He is eager to cast in again and again where a shoal is passing by." What wonder that in such heavenly

employment the Savior could say to the disciples, as yet uninitiated into this heavenly art, unacquainted with the hunger that consumed the winner of souls, or the joys of redeeming love, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of?"

There was a divine "needs be" that directed the Savior's steps to Samaria. The controlling reasons were neither geographical nor political. Sovereign grace had marked this spot as one in which to display its power. It was an unlikely hour at which to meet any of the people. And it would seem that this woman, of irregular life, was the least likely person to fulfill the Savior's desires as He came to that well-side, seeking to save. But divine wisdom had seen all, arranged all. The hunger of the Son of man was not to be unsatisfied. Here He found food richer than angels eat; and, as He tasted of it He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." Perhaps He had been long fasting in spirit when He came to Jacob's well. We know that He was driven from Jerusalem by the envy and malice of the Pharisees, who could not bear to hear it said that He made and baptized more disciples than John the Baptist. Penetrating the strange and inhospitable region of Samaria, He carried with Him the same longing for souls that had possessed Him at Jerusalem, and when He found a lost sinner who was willing to listen to His message of salvation, His joy was like that of one who, after long fasting, is called to

sit down to a feast. Jesus would gladly have slaked His thirst at Jacob's well but there was a deeper thirst in His heart of love, and as He stooped to drink of the answering love of a sinner His grace had saved, His joy was so great that hunger and thirst of the body were forgotten. Dr. Arnot relates a story in apt illustration:

"A traveller lost his way in an Eastern desert. His provisions were exhausted, and he had already wandered about for several days without food, when he descried under a palm-tree on his track the marks of a recent encampment. He approached the spot, tremulous with hope. He found a bag which the travellers had left behind, filled with something that appeared to be dates. He opened it eagerly expecting to satisfy his hunger; when lo, it contained only pearls! He sat down and wept. What are pearls to a man who is dying for bread?" "Jesus," continues this fascinating expositor, "is Lord of all. Those glorious stars that stud the heavens are all His. They are the jewels which belong to His crown. He values them; but they do not satisfy His soul. To Christ these shining orbs are like the pearls to the fainting traveller in the desert. They are precious and pure; but he cannot live upon them. Christ does not need to redeem those bright worlds and those unfallen angels, and they cannot therefore satisfy His appetite. To seek the strayed, to redeem the lost, to renew the fallen, to lay down His life for

them, this is His meat; and for this food He must pass through those shining worlds." And we may add, insignificant as is our little world among the great family of stars, it will forever shine conspicuous in the vault of heaven, while the material universe remains, as the one world where the Lord of glory " for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame."

We have seen how, when the seventy returned, rehearsing the result of their mission, Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and bade them rejoice that their names were written in heaven; and then, as with a spiritual hunger whetted for souls, He burst out with that loving invitation, upon which a perishing world has been feasting ever since,—" Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

When Zaccheus was called from the sycamore tree by the roadside, he came down and received Jesus joyfully. But Jesus received Zaccheus joyfully too. His appetite was not to be disappointed in that busy, pleasure-loving city. " For the Son of man was come to seek and to save that which was lost."

This is the explanation of all our Savior's endurance in life and of His patient suffering upon the cross. Hunger brought Him from heaven. Hunger impelled Him forward to Calvary. Hunger caused Him to weep, like the traveller in the desert over his useless pearls, as He looked upon

the glittering domes of the Holy City and thought of the multitudes His love could not save. "I have a baptism to be baptized with," He cried on His way to Jerusalem to suffer, "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

There are other ends met in eating beside the gratification of the appetite. Bodily strength is renewed; the whole frame is refreshed and invigorated; even the spirit feels the impulse of a new life; and the faculties that were dull and listless while the body was famished are sharpened for duty, as it was with Jonathan in the wood when he cried, "See how mine eyes have been enlightened because I tasted a little of this honey!" (1 Sam. xiv: 29). Whether Jesus thus went from strength to strength, as He gathered in souls during His earthly ministry, it is assuredly true that thus we may become spiritually strong, and thus will our eyes be opened to see spiritual truths hidden from those who are not workers together with Christ in winning men. Perhaps you are weak, fainting in the way, doubtful of your own acceptance with God, tempted to give up the struggle and go back to the world. And you say that you have tried in vain to feed upon the word, upon prayer, upon Christian fellowship, upon the ordinances of the sanctuary. Try one thing more, my brother. Seek to save souls. Seek them by the light of a godly example, seek them by prayer, seek them by earnest, timely and loving solicitation; and as your

hunger for the lost is met, your faith in God will be strengthened and your zest for duty renewed.

There is no better way to dispel the mists of doubt than to be in earnest in doing good. Like the Master you may learn to say, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and finish His work."

Jesus rejoiced in the prospect of a finished work. To accomplish that work was His meat; to enter into His spirit and to labor to secure the results of His sacrifice may well be ours.

Yet Jesus has other food for us too. We cannot live upon toil alone. And to prepare us for toil, and to enable us to take a hunger-like relish in it, he gathers us into the sanctuary and bids us feast upon His love.

"I am the living bread, which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John vi: 51).

Give us our daily Bread,
O God, the bread of strength!
For we have learnt to know
How weak we are at length.
As children we are weak;
As children must be fed;
Give us thy Grace, O Lord,
To be our daily Bread.

Give us our daily Bread,
To cheer our fainting soul;
The feast of comfort, Lord,
And peace, to make us whole;
For we are sick of tears,
The useless tears we shed;—
Now give us comfort, Lord,
To be our daily Bread.

Give us our daily Bread,
The Bread of angels, Lord,
By us so many times,
Broken, betrayed, adored;
His Body and His Blood;—
The feast that Jesus spread;
Give HIM,—our life, our all—
To be our daily Bread.

ADELAIDE A. PROCTER.

VI

GLAD TIDINGS AT NAZARETH

WE have already recognized the foregleams of rejoicing seen in the prophets concerning the Messiah. That was a "joyful hour" at Nazareth when Jesus opened the roll of the prophet Isaiah, and read these words;—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Passages of Scripture such as this are like full honeycombs, running over with the sweetness of the Gospel. They are like the vines of Eshcol, bearing goodly clusters. They are as a bundle of myrrh; and though unbound by unskillful hands, the fragrance fills the house. The teacher or the writer sinks out of sight, but Christ cannot be hid. The singer may be forgotten; but the song abides in the heart. Let us share in the joy of the Lord as we seek to unfold these words. Amid the abundance of the material here set before us it is

hard to choose, but let us remark first, upon the *unity of revelation.* People talk about the difference between the Old and the New Testaments, as if the spirit of the Old were hard and severe, and the spirit of the New, all mercy and love. But the apparent severity of the Old Testament is only the necessary limitation that love finds to her manifestations where men are not ready to receive her. The Old Testament is not the New, as the bud is not the flower; the dawn is not the day; the opening strains are not the oratorio. The bud may not be fragrant; but sweet will be the flower—and without the bud we shall not have it. The dawn is dim; but the noon of the same day is glorious. The opening notes of the Gospel may be heard in the Old Testament; the Hallelujah chorus is in the New; but it is one song all the Scripture writers sing,—

"Salvation, Oh the joyful sound!"

And, as in a mighty chorus, they whose voices were first heard do not cease to sing as others join in the song;—so Moses and David and Isaiah and Job and Ezekiel and Jeremiah sing on; while the strain is taken up by the Evangelists and Apostles and by our blessed Lord Himself. And we who hear these earlier singers, chanting in harmony with the words of Jesus and of John and of Paul, find more melody in the sweet strains they utter than did the saints of an earlier time who heard

them sing alone. For where David seemed to the men of his own generation to be speaking only of the glories of his own kingdom, or sounding the praises of Solomon, we now understand that he is exulting also, and in larger measure, in Messiah's kingdom and rule. Where Jeremiah appeared to be lamenting only the downfall of Jerusalem, or exulting in her recovery, we now find that his mourning applies to Zion's low estate, and his prayers embrace her prosperity in all the earth. And while to his cotemporaries Isaiah seemed only to comfort the captives in Babylon and to predict their deliverance, we hear his voice, blending in sweet symphony with that of the Carpenter of Nazareth, whose gracious words in the Synagogue begin with this utterance,—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

. . . And so we pass to notice the source of all comfort and joy. It was the Spirit of the Lord that inspired David's song, and touched Isaiah's lips, and uplifted Ezekiel in vision, and exalted Daniel in prophetic rapture, and opened the eyes of John to see and his mouth to utter the glories of the New Jerusalem,—and all for the comfort and support of the people of God.

These holy men of God were anointed for their ministry as truly as was Christ, though to Him alone was the Spirit given without measure. They were sent of God, and He who sent them continues to send forth His messengers of comfort. Our Savior said of His disciples,—"As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."

May God multiply the heralds of salvation an hundredfold, that the burdened children of men may know all the comforts of the Gospel. "Let him that heareth say, Come, and every one that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Rev. xxii: 17; ii: 7).

How appropriate does it seem that Jesus speaks these comforting words at Nazareth, where He had been brought up! And it was by the Spirit of God that He was directed to this congenial ministry among His own townspeople. For nearly thirty years He had lived and toiled here. His heart was knit to many in that synagogue by social and friendly ties. He knew their heart sorrows, and He longed to heal them. And though His own received Him not, His example should stimulate us to seek to bless especially the souls that are nearest to us.

Yet, as it was the intimation that the Gospel was not for the Jews alone that enraged the people of Nazareth, so many now whom we would point to the Savior, show by their narrowness and bigotry that they utterly misunderstand the Gospel. They

who would confine the blessings of salvation to the heathen at home need to know that the broken-hearted can be comforted only as they themselves become comforters; and that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

. . . But let us examine more particularly the passage from Isaiah which our Lord applies to Himself. It sets before us the scope and fullness of the Gospel. It sufficiently indicates the universality of the Gospel that it is to be preached to the poor,—while the distinctive blessings of the Glad tidings are set forth in the gracious words, "He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted; to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." And Jesus later emphasized the message:—"THE POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM!" And who are the poor? Not merely they who are without worldly substance. A wider class is embraced in this designation. In the meaning of Scripture, the poor are they who are destitute of anything that may be necessary to their holiness and happiness. It was a king who cried, "I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me" (Ps. xl: 17). David felt that without the Lord's mercies and favor, though he sat upon the throne of Israel, he was poor indeed. The religion of Jesus Christ is a system of consolation for the wretched. The great mass of mankind are liter-

ally poor in temporal possessions; but so are they, in common with those rich in temporal good, poor and needy in spirit.

By indicating therefore poverty of spirit as the want the Gospel is designed to supply, Christ points out its universal scope. Yet that the literal poor, the down-trodden and the lowest of the social scale, who compose the mass of humanity, should share at all in the blessings of this remedial system, this is the distinguishing feature of the religion of Jesus Christ. Nothing like it had ever been known to antiquity. Nothing like it is ever attempted in modern times, save under the impulse of Christianity. The idea of elevating and blessing the common people, and especially servants, slaves and criminals, is perfectly original with the Gospel system. Sages in all lands, and in every age, have indeed been heard uttering the voice of superior wisdom. Some sublime "guesses at truth" we have from philosophers and poets of antiquity; some lofty maxims; some wise sayings. But who were reached and helped by these speculations and counsels? Only select pupils, intimate friends or distinguished guests. The teachings of the wisest men of antiquity never went beyond a very narrow circle of the upper classes of society. If, on a rare public occasion, a poem was recited, a history read, a tragedy acted in public, as at the Olympic games, the design was not to benefit the masses, but to secure their applause, as the reader or actor was

crowned with the olive in their presence. What did the poor of Greece know of the philosophy of Plato, or the slaves of Rome of the dissertations of Cicero? And, even if these teachings had been diffused among the masses, what was there in them to elevate or to comfort the poor? What were the glad tidings of pagan philosophy? The two great antagonistic systems both offered the hungry heart of man a stone. The one said, "This earth is all; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!" The other said, "Blunt your sensibilities, destroy your affections, stamp out your desires, here only is happiness." How different the teachings of the Gospel!

This blessed system is for the poor of all lands. It addresses the wretched everywhere. It has already penetrated to every quarter of the globe, and will yet extend to the darkest places of the earth. And everywhere it offers instruction to the ignorant, comfort to the afflicted, and liberty to the captive. It will do for the Moslem, the Hindoo, the African, what it does equally well for the rich and cultured of Christian lands, who heartily receive it. The beggar, the outcast, the criminal may find relief, as truly as a resident of a palace in London, or Paris or Chicago.

Christianity does not change the constitution of the human soul. It takes men as they are, with their God-given faculties, with their deep seated desires for happiness, with their affections, with

their mutual social relations, and offers its blessed healing for their sicknesses and satisfaction for their wants. The Gospel blesses the poor everywhere by bettering their social condition, lifting them above abject poverty, and making them share in all the outward advantages of a Christian civilization.

What a contrast do we find between the condition of a poor man in America and the poor of Africa, or Turkey or Russia, or China! The best minds in Europe and America are working upon social problems whose solution means the elevation of the poor. Philanthropic efforts are carried on for their benefit. The poorest man in America may own a Bible. He is welcome to the churches, whether they be cathedrals or plain chapels. The free schools educate his children. The hospitals and asylums receive him and care for him in his misfortune. He is better paid, better clad, better fed, better treated everywhere and in every way than the poor of any other land or age ever were. And all this is the direct result of the teaching of the Gospel.

It has been suggested that were two maps constructed, the one depicting the prevalence of Christianity or heathenism, by light and dark colors respectively; and the other the diffusion of happiness and misery over the earth, the two maps would very closely correspond. The lands marked with Gospel light are the lands where the poor are lifted

up and blessed; while in lands of pagan darkness,

> "Man's inhumanity to man
> Makes countless thousands mourn."

In London alone there are more than two thousand agencies for the relief of the poor, and more than twenty-five million dollars are annually expended for their help. All our great cities have like charities. In like manner, the Gospel lifts the burdens of humanity by multiplying friends, sympathy and kindness to the sick and suffering. Christ is the Great Physician. He healed many diseases when He was in the flesh; but He has literally healed many thousands more by the agencies of the Gospel since He left the earth.

The Gospel cultivates and fosters true science which has done so much to discover and remove the causes of disease and to mitigate its evils. It works not by ignoring means, but by employing them. It often guides, by the blessing of God, in answer to prayer, to the right physician, to the right medicine, to the right change, and it imparts that calmness and resignation to the sufferer that is so favorable to recovery. Truly,

> "The healing of His seamless dress
> Is by our beds of pain;
> We touch Him in life's throng and press,
> And we are whole again."

The testimony of Isabella Bird Bishop is noteworthy,—She says, "Medical missions are the out-

come of the living teachings of our faith. I have now visited such missions in many parts of the world; and never saw one which was not healing, helping, blessing, softening prejudice, diminishing suffering, telling in every work of love and of consecrated skill of the infinite compassion of Him who 'came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.'"

We have come upon troublous times, now that the powers of darkness have been let loose upon the earth. The horror of almost universal war is upon us. But let no one say that Christianity is to blame for this state of things, or that Christianity is in any sense a failure because they exist. It has been the refusal to accept Christianity on the part of those who wage unjust warfare that is responsible for all this devastation and bloodshed. The doctrine that "might makes right" is not the Gospel, nor is "the survival of the fittest," as men judge of fitness, the law of the kingdom of heaven. But when brutal might rises to crush the helpless, the true followers of Christ see in the very sufferings of the oppressed and down-trodden, their great opportunity to bring the consolations of the Gospel to those who so sorely need them. When in all the wars of the past were so many and such efficient agencies multiplied to bring relief to the stricken and to heal the brokenhearted? When has so much ever been done for the spiritual interests of soldiers and sailors as is being done now by the

Y. M. C. A. and kindred organizations of Christian lands?

But we have all too little space left to tell of the spiritual sickness, bondage and blindness which the Gospel is sent to relieve. "To the poor the Gospel is preached." The word here rendered poor properly denotes the afflicted, the distressed, the needy; and as it is amplified in the following clauses we see that it designates not outward evils only, but all the sufferings of the mind and heart.

The Gospel brings its chief blessings to the souls of men. It emphasizes the value of the spiritual man. It demonstrates that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth." It proves that death does not end all. The Gospel of Jesus Christ shows me how, with abundance of this world's goods, I may be poor in spiritual possessions.

And I need this spiritual enlightenment. Sin not only blinds the eyes to the truths of the Gospel, so that, without Christ's healing touch, the sinner remains blind and ignorant of his blindness, but all the remedies this world has to offer him ignore his sad condition and make his case nothing the better, but rather the worse. "Physicians of no value" are all they who would "heal slightly the hurt of the daughter of my people" (Jer. vi: 14).

Says S. Baring Gould, "Some years ago an institution for the blind was erected in one of our

large towns. The committee put their wise heads together and decided that as the building was for the blind,—for those who could not see,—there was only waste of money and no reason in going to the expense of windows. Scientific ventilation and heating were provided, but no windows; because, as the committee very logically put it, it was no use in the world in providing light for those who cannot see. Accordingly the new blind asylum was inaugurated and opened; and the poor, sightless patients settled into the house.

"Things did not go well with them however. They began to sicken one after another. A great languor fell upon them. They felt always distressed and restless, craving for something they hardly knew what; and after one or two had died and all were ill, the committee sat on the matter and resolved to open windows. Then the sun poured in and the white faces recovered their color and the flagging vital energies revived, the depressed spirits recovered, and health and rest returned. I think that is not unlike the condition of a vast number of people."

Even the spiritually blind of this world receive untold benefits from Christ; but how much more do they receive whose eyes are opened by him. The Gospel convicts me of spiritual blindness. It reveals to me my condition, as a miserable captive, bruised and scourged by sin. It makes known to me the plague of my heart, and convinces me that

it is a disease without remedy by human means. And, better than all this, it points me to the Healer, the Deliverer, the Comforter. It proclaims the great truths of immortality, of the forgiveness of sins, of the presence of God, of the comfort of the Holy Spirit, of the Christian's triumph over death, of the life everlasting. It sets the promises thick as stars in the night of my affliction. It places beneath the weak and the faltering the "*Everlasting Arms.*" It hushes the tempest raised in the bosom by conscious guilt, with the words, "Peace, be still!" It stands by the side of the mourner and comforts the stricken heart with the assurance, "Thy son, thy daughter, liveth." It reconciles the sufferer to the Cross and calls forth praises from the lips that quiver with pain. It lights up the Father's house for the wandering and travel-worn children of men. It is simple in its terms, reasonable in its requirements, truthful in its teachings and authoritative in its proclamations. It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation.

It was the Author of salvation who stood in the little synagogue at Nazareth and proclaimed "the acceptable year of the Lord." The true Jubilee, deliverance from the yoke and burden of sin. But "His own received Him not."

This same Jesus speaks to us now. It is "a time accepted,—a day of salvation." No one of you, my readers, will be saved as a matter of course. You are sinful, and you need this Savior. With-

out Him you are lost forever. But His mercy invites you to penitence and to prayer. "Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I counsel thee," says the Savior, "to buy of Me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see" (Rev. iii: 17, 18).

At Nazareth, Christ was wounded in the house of his friends. Alas for you if you send Him away, rejected from your heart to-day!

VII

IN THE HOLY MOUNT

WHAT matter whether the Transfiguration of our Lord took place upon Mount Tabor or upon Mount Hermon? Not the place, but the scene claims our chief attention. The lessons to be learned are not of local interest, and the privilege of sharing for a little time, the companionship of the Master, is worth infinitely more than the most exact knowledge of the localities of His life and death. Let us not then concern ourselves with questions of chronology or of geography. Our aspiration is loftier. We would see "Jesus only." It is enough as we ascend with Him, either this mountain or that, that we are following in the footsteps of the Son of God. It is a mountain apart; and we need fear no interruption. It is high; and here we may remain for a little season above the world, in a heavenly place.

We infer that it was the evening hour, when Jesus led His disciples up the mount. Luke says He descended the next day, and we know that it was no uncommon thing for our Lord to spend the night in prayer.

We are told that he went apart to pray

(Luke ix: 28) and the opportunity was afforded the disciples also for prayer; but, with them, if the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak. Night is the natural time for rest; and though the favored three were perhaps the most devout of His followers, "Peter, and they that were with him were heavy with sleep."

He who was called the "Rock," and they who were "Sons of Thunder" were men, of like passions as we are. Let us not envy them their privileges, since they make so poor a use of them. Let us consider that, if we may not see the glory of the Holy Mount, nor hear a voice from heaven, speaking through a mysterious cloud, we may learn better lessons than did Peter and James and John.

The shadows deepen upon the mountain, for the day is declining. The glimmering landscape that, stretching far and wide, but a little while ago embraced in its compass the hills of Galilee and perhaps the valley of Megiddo and the western sea, now fades from sight. The busy hum of industry on the plains below has ceased; and, save the stirring of the night winds through the branches of the cedars and the trickling of the mountain rills, all nature is hushed and still. The disciples are asleep, and the Redeemer prays.

Let us pause upon the threshold, e'er we enter the holiest of all these transfiguration scenes, and ask, Why these prayers of Jesus? He had no

sins to confess; no forgiveness to crave, yet no one on earth ever prayed so fervently as the Son of man. Especially at every marked crisis of His life were His earnest supplications called forth. On the mountain, in the garden, at the cross, He prayed! If He felt the need of prayer, much more may we, when led, either by temptation or by privilege, up "an exceeding high mountain apart," when blessed with the fellowship of the Master, or when shown for our trial all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. For in either case our only safety lies in a humility born of prayer.

Could we listen to these earnest pleadings we might indeed learn the true spirit of devotion as we never learned it before; but we could not learn from these supplications of our Lord alone what things to pray for as we ought. We are sinful; He was not. And the language of His lips, as He sought not grace, but merited help from His divine Father, would ill become us as we draw near to God. Christ taught His immediate disciples, as He teaches us, how to pray. He prayed for them, as He prays for us. It may reconcile us to the thought that the privilege of praying with the Master, in bodily presence upon the earth, is not granted us, to reflect that even had His own disciples not been overwhelmed with slumber, on this occasion, they could not have joined Him in His mountain prayer. He approached the Father by a

right they could not claim; they had petitions to offer He could not share.

The disciples sleep and the Redeemer prays. Though nearing the hour of His strange baptism, and from this time on more frequently than before pouring out His soul unto death, with strong crying and tears, He surely forgets not, in His supplications, these weary disciples. And surely if He could then remember them, let none doubt His loving intercession now. "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

The hours wear on. The disciples sleep, and the Redeemer prays; when lo, suddenly the solitary place is flooded with a "great wakening light." It is not the light of the moon, breaking from behind a cloud; nor has the sun risen upon the earth. Never did moon or sun shine with such heavenly splendor.

The three disciples awake and behold the form of their Master transfigured. The fashion of His countenance is altered. It bears no longer a line or shadow, such as marked him hitherto as the "man of sorrows." It is not a reflected brightness, such as Moses bore upon his countenance when he came down from Sinai; but a glory all His own transforms the Son of man. Moses hid the shining of his face behind a veil, but no covering can hide the glory of the Lord of Moses, transfigured upon the mount. For, through the fleshly tabernacle there streams such radiance that His

very raiment becomes shining exceeding white, rivalling the snow-caps glistening upon the mountain ridges, and "so as no fuller upon earth can white them." Nature and art are both appealed to in vain to furnish an image that shall set forth the Redeemer's transcendent glory upon this occasion.

Yet though the human form of Jesus was thus transfigured before the wondering eyes of His disciples, who never before saw His glory, this was not a transfiguration of the Son of God. As well might we say that the rift in the cloud that permits the sun to shine forth, flooding the heavens with glory, is the sun itself. Jesus upon the Mount was transfigured as to His humanity; but His humanity was itself a transfiguration, in humiliation.

The Son of God was transfigured all the days He spent upon the earth in the likeness of sinful flesh. This was but a partial manifestation of that glory He had with the Father before the world was. It might be called the transfiguration of the Son of man; but not the transfiguration of the Son of God. On the mount His flesh streamed with effulgent radiance; but even more glorious was His appearance in the bosom of the Father; even more glorious is His resurrection body now. "For the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another" (1 Cor. xv: 40). The disciples, though with dazzled eyes, look

upon this; they could not behold the unveiled essential glory of their Lord and live.

But heavenly visitors, too, are here, who, in some unexplained manner, are made known to the disciples. Peter, James and John have not to ask, "Who are these in bright robes, and whence came they?" They recognize them at once as Moses and Elijah, the giver and the restorer of the law, the greatest of all Israel's leaders and the greatest of all her prophets;—two who were mighty in their lives and who were both in a mysterious manner taken from earth: the one hurried to an unknown grave by the very Lord whose glory he now comes to witness; and the other snatched from the jaws of death, and taken home to heaven in a chariot of fire. The two men with mention of whom the Old Testament closes; and the two through whom prophecy is earliest vindicated in the New. Moses said, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me" (Deut. xviii: 15), (Acts iii: 22). And the Spirit through Malachi declared, "Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come." In Jesus Himself stood revealed the prophet like unto Moses; and in John the Baptist He taught his followers to recognize Elijah who was to come. The heir of Pharaoh's crown, who esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt and the solitary prophet whose watchword was

"The Lord Jehovah liveth before whom I stand," both now stand in the presence of the King. How cheaply purchased, even by all the fiery trials of their lives, this moment of triumph!

Could two more illustrious personages have been selected from the whole ancient Church to be eye-witnesses with the apostles of our Lord's majesty? Into the things of redemption the angels desire to look, and surely redeemed men have a deeper interest in every scene than they; for upon the consummation of the Redeemer's sufferings their hopes, as well as the hopes of a perishing world must rest. What wonder that every other theme is forgotten; and though these visitors come as messengers direct from heaven, their hearts are too full to speak of aught but His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.

We have spoken of the joyful hours spent by Jesus upon the earth; and surely such a time as this may well be recognized as a season of ineffable joy. Heaven has never seemed so manifestly to come down to earth. The glory of the world of light is here, and here are heavenly guests, and a voice from the visible Shekinah proclaims, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." And yet, over all this brightness there falls the mysterious shadow of the Cross. They speak of His decease. Jesus had told His disciples of it just before this; and from this stage of His ministry it is a theme frequently upon His lips,—

a pleasing, painful theme; a baptism toward which He pressed forward with eagerness, for the joy that was set before Him; and yet from which He shrank back, crying "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me."

We infer that the slumbering apostles have missed this heavenly converse, or at least the first part of it. The theme was exalted, the speakers were from heaven, the subject matter of their discourse deeply concerned them; but they were asleep! Surely if they have heard what was said they have strangely misunderstood its meaning; and how inopportune seem the words of the half-bewildered, yet now as ever forward Peter, "Master, it is good for us to be here; if Thou wilt let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee and one for Moses, and one for Elias."

But if the apostles have failed to understand the words of the prophets of the Old Testament and the greater words of the Prophet of the New, it is not meant that they shall fail to hear the voice from heaven, which attests and confirms the mission of their divine Lord. God, who spake from the cloud upon Sinai, appears in a cloud above the awe-stricken three. It is the Shekinah, the symbol of the divine presence. Not a dark, but a luminous cloud. Yet even the brightness of the Shekinah is as a veil before the "light unapproachable and full glory," where the essential Godhead dwells.

Moses at Sinai cried, "I exceedingly fear and quake;" and the apostles fear as their Lord and His prophets enter into the cloud. Yet there are here no such voices and thunderings as made Mount Sinai to shake. The glory of the mount of Transfiguration eclipses the glory of Sinai as much as grace eclipses legality. The servant was sent from the latter, with glory on His countenance, and with delegated authority to speak for God. The Son Himself, resplendent with His own glory upon the former, speaks as Master and Lord, and the emphatic command of the Father is, "Hear ye Him."

Dazzled with the excess of glory, the apostles seem to avert their eyes, and when they look again, the scene is changed. The heavenly visitors have departed as mysteriously as they came; the voice has died away; the supernatural light and the overhanging cloud are gone; and they see no man, save JESUS ONLY!

Many questions of surpassing interest start up, as we reflect upon this glorious scene in the life of our Lord. We might contemplate the "unity of the Old and New Testaments, as attested by this apparition of the Princes of the Old, in solemn yet familiar converse with the Lord of the New" (Trench); of the immortality of the soul, as evinced by the presence of men who, for more than a thousand years had passed away from earth; of the doctrine of the resurrection and of the na-

ture of these risen and changed bodies; of the recognition of friends in heaven, since Peter, James and John, though they have never seen these prophets before, yet so readily distinguish them; of the question as to whether this is a solitary instance of departing saints visiting the earth. We stay to discuss none of these matters now; and mention them only to indicate how fruitful for meditation is the scene of the Transfiguration.

A few other things, however, we will observe.

Note the testimony given to Christ by the voice from heaven. Not only did it manifest the communion and sympathy of the Father, and strengthen the Son for the hour of His suffering; but it attested to His followers the supremacy of His claims. Though much of the conversation of the shining ones was unintelligible to the disciples at the time, so profound was the impression made by this announcement of the Father that it never faded from their minds.

More than thirty years afterward the apostle Peter referred to it in the emphatic language, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the coming and power of our Lord Jesus Christ; but were eye-witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well

pleased.' And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with Him in the holy mount" (1 Pet. i: 16).

Mark the deference paid to Christ by the greatest teachers of the Old Testament. To Him gave all the prophets witness; and surely there is special significance in the fact that Moses, who gave the Law on Sinai and Elijah who vindicated it upon Carmel, here appear to bear witness to the superior claims of Jesus of Nazareth. "Again, as at the Jordan, did the representatives of the two Covenants meet," and the language of the Baptist evinced the spirit of his prototype, "He must increase, but I must decrease." The law and the prophets find their complete fulfillment, as they find their solution, in Jesus only.

Moses and Elijah appear as redeemed saints, who owe their salvation to Christ's atoning work.

"Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain.

But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our guilt away.
A sacrifice of nobler name,
And richer blood than they."

Moses and Elijah, though they had shed the blood of countless victims, yet looked forward, with keenest personal interest, to the "bringing in

of a better hope," as "they spake of His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem."

We may learn anew the lesson that we have higher privileges than Peter, James and John enjoyed.

Better to sit at Jesus' feet, in the quiet seclusion of the sanctuary, than to witness His glory with dazzled eyes and trembling hearts and minds so bewildered that we know not what to speak. Better is our understanding of the scenes of the Transfiguration itself than was theirs; "For we have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well that we take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in our hearts."

It is good for us to be here; but, unlike Peter, we care not to detain Moses and Elijah. Our chief interest and affection center upon Jesus only.

Jesus only. Let it be our watchword while life lasts! Systems of philosophy may come and go; the only teachings that have permanent power to still the tumult of our passions and bring peace to our troubled hearts find their embodiment in Jesus only.

Friends may come like angels from the skies, kindling in our breasts the flames of warm affection; and leaving us as they depart the hollow mockery of broken friendships, or the voiceless clay that responds not to our call. The Friend

who never forgets, never forsakes, never dies, is Jesus only.

We cannot, indeed, dwell always upon the mount. We must descend, as did the disciples, and often learn how near together are the scenes of glory and of wretchedness; but we shall be better fitted for the ministry of love if, after communing with Jesus only as He leads us thus apart, we follow Jesus only as He leads us down the mount.

Whether on the heights of some mount of privilege or in the deepest vale of humiliation and sorrow, "God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And when the sacerdotal prayer of our Lord is fulfilled, "Father I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which Thou hast given me;"—when the "righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father;"—when, not with two or three of His saints only, but with "the General Assembly and Church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven," we shall behold face to face the beauty of the King, in that "city that hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, because the glory of God doth lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof;" our glad song of praise shall declare that heaven knows no attraction that does not meet in Jesus only.

"Unto Him that loved us and washed us from

our sins in His own blood . . . to him be glory and dominion forever and ever AMEN! (Rev. 1:5, 6).

Jesus, thy love alone, alone thy love
Refresheth me;
And for that love of thine, that freshening love,
I come to thee.

It is thy cross alone, alone thy cross
That healeth me;
And for that cross of thine, that healing cross,
I come to thee.

It is thy blood alone, alone thy blood,
That cleanseth me,
And for that blood of thine, that cleansing blood,
I come to thee.

It is thy life alone, alone thy life
That saveth me;
And for that life of thine, that saving life,
I come to thee.

It is thy joy alone, alone thy joy,
That gladdens me;
And for that joy of thine, that gladdening joy,
I come to thee.

Savior, 'tis thou thyself, alone thyself,
Art all to me;
And for that all, of everything I need,
I come to thee.

BONAR.

VIII

SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS RECOGNIZED

PETER'S heart was right, though his mind was somewhat bewildered. It was not with the Transfiguration in view that he ascended the mount. None of the chosen three knew what was in store for them when Jesus called them aside. They loved the Master's society, and they followed at His bidding. Luke says, "He took Peter, John and James and went up into a mountain to pray." They knew, as they toiled up its steep ascent, that they were with Jesus, and that was enough. We may well believe that none of them would have been chosen to behold this glorious Epiphany if they would not as readily have followed their Lord into humiliation and suffering. Yet we are not surprised that the complacent satisfaction of the impulsive disciple finds expression at the unexpected vision, "Master, it is good for us to be here."

Let us notice Peter's appreciation of the best things. He was loyal to Christ, through and through, this Man of Rock. His choice had been made with decision, and he owned no other master. No impartial student of the Scriptures can doubt

his thorough conversion, despite his subsequent fall, under the sore siftings of Satan. His faults, like his virtues, are prominent; but Jesus had won his heart, and henceforth the things of the kingdom of heaven were dearer to him than earthly possessions, friendships and honors. He was glad to be in solitude with his Savior, that he might enjoy his company and receive his instruction; and when this unexpected vision burst upon him his heart was filled with rejoicing.

Not every one who knew of the Savior, when He lived among men, would have been affected as Peter was at such an event. Could Herod, or the High Priest, or Judas have witnessed the Transfiguration their attitude toward Jesus would have remained unchanged. Had this great event taken place before the multitude many would doubtless have been dazzled by the vision, but it is not likely that a single heart would have responded, " Master, it is good for us to be here," who had not before that hour acknowledged Him to be their Lord.

Miracles do not compel faith. The Israelites worshipped the golden calf under the very crags of Sinai where they had heard Jehovah's voice, and many saw the works of Jesus in the flesh only to despise and wonder and perish. It was because Peter possessed a devout heart that he rejoiced in this wonderful display of divine glory. His interest was not that of an entranced spectator of a new wonder, seen but once in a lifetime; or that

Moses and Elijah, the two greatest prophets of the past, stood before Him.

Doubtless it would have been difficult for Peter to have analyzed his feelings. Luke plainly tells us that he knew not what he said; but who can doubt that he spoke out of the abundance of his heart, and that his deepest emotions were of a spiritual nature? The vision was supernatural; but this was not the chief matter. Every circumstance and incident of the Transfiguration centered in the glory of Christ. This radiant countenance, these dazzling robes, these heavenly visitors, this mysterious cloud, this approving voice, all testified that Jesus was the beloved Son of God. What wonder that a disciple whose love was so ardent, whose loyalty was so unquestioned, should rejoice in this supreme moment of triumph and feel that it was indeed good to be there!

We shall none of us ever witness in this life a scene like the Transfiguration. But like emotions have often stirred the hearts of God's people when the Master's presence has been manifested with power. Indeed an important test of true piety is found in the interest men take in religious privileges.

Wherever the Church of God is found "the thoughts of many hearts are revealed" by the attitude they assume toward it. It is in Zion that God reveals His presence with peculiar power. Yet men's minds are affected in a very different man-

ner by the claims of the sanctuary. There were multitudes in Galilee who would rather have witnessed a theatrical show, a triumphant procession, or a king's coronation, than have seen the glory of our Lord upon the mount. But Peter and his fellow disciples felt that it was better to see what they saw than to see the splendor of earthly courts, or to have places of honor assigned them in the most powerful of earthly kingdoms. Multitudes in our day prefer the glamor of the world to Christ. It is nothing to them that the Church throws open her doors, that the infinite Jehovah has promised to meet His people at the place of prayer; that there scenes often transpire that give joy in heaven; that there is told the marvelous story of redeeming love; that there God speaks to the people through His living word, and through the voice of the living minister, whenever the truth as it is in Jesus is proclaimed; that there often are seen the transformations of grace when souls are born again. There are many who hear of all these things with utter indifference, who rarely cross the threshold of the sanctuary or if, stimulated by curiosity or influenced by friends, they lend their occasional presence, their hearts are unmoved.

We need to have it impressed upon us that the only thing that imparts spiritual power to the Church is the presence of the Lord of glory. It is not the furnishing of the house, not the eloquence of the preacher, not the sweetness of any singer's

voice, not the assembled multitude, but the Spirit of God that gives Zion her peculiar blessings. "The Lord hath chosen Zion." "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."

God blesses the homes of all who love Him. He is the God of the household. We rejoice in that. But God dwells in Zion as He dwells nowhere else; and His true people are homesick when they are deprived of the privileges of meeting Him in His own house. Like David they are ready to cry, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God" (Ps. xlii: 1, 2). Perhaps some of us attend the house of God with no expectation of witnessing any unusual displays of His presence, as the disciples toiled up the mountain with Jesus with no anticipations of His Transfiguration. It is good for us to be there, even if we witness nothing that we have not seen before, if only we are assured that His Spirit is with us, if we can pour out our hearts in prayer before Him, if we can appropriate the promises and can say when we return to our homes, "Did not our hearts burn within us" while we met the Lord yonder!

But again, Peter's language expresses his appreciation of special privileges. Not all the disciples were called up to the mount. There was an inner circle among the twelve. Why Jesus used

this discrimination we do not know; but we cannot doubt that the temper of mind and fitness for service seen in the favored three explain the Lord's preference. They only were with Him at the Transfiguration; they only, of all the disciples, were admitted to the chamber where Jairus' daughter was raised to life; and they only were with our Savior in the garden of Gethsemane.

Peter may mean to recognize the distinguishing favor that permitted them to behold a vision that other disciples did not share when he says, "Master, it is good for us to be here!"

And assuredly we have sometimes seen displays of God's goodness in the sanctuary that our fellow Christians have not witnessed. We have sat together in heavenly places, and our hearts have burned within us as the truth of the Gospel has come home to us with peculiar power; or we have seen the joyful sight of many joining themselves to the Lord; or the Sacramental ordinances have been in an especial manner blessed to the whole congregation. God's Spirit has been suddenly poured out, melting and subduing and filling the hearts of His waiting people, until the language of their souls is one, "It is good for us to be here." Not all our seasons of service are marked by equal enjoyment. There are transfiguration scenes and scenes of trial. The disciples were on the mountain with Jesus one night and the next day were with Jesus amid the troubled company

surrounding the paralytic boy. With Jesus on both occasions; but with what different emotions! There are heights and depths of religious experience. We speak now of scenes of spiritual joy in the sanctuary, when more than wonted impressions have been made upon the heart. Every believer may recall such seasons. When some friend, long prayed for, came out upon the Lord's side. When some sermon touched the heart with unusual power. When some burden, long borne, was lifted. When the Holy Communion, perhaps the first, was especially precious. All these were transfiguration scenes.

Sometimes in very small assemblies, even where but two or three are gathered, the blessing of the Spirit is given. There were but three witnesses of the Transfiguration; and many a time since Christ has shown the light of His countenance to the little company that has been gathered together in His name.

We greatly undervalue our privileges if we judge that the chosen three on the mount of Transfiguration had superior advantages to those that we enjoy. They saw indeed a visible glory of Christ; they met Moses and Elijah face to face; they heard the voice of the Father, speaking from the luminous cloud; but the vision was transient, their minds were bewildered, their understanding was imperfect, and they were unprepared, even by these unusual scenes, to enter into sympathy with

their Master, as He discoursed to them while coming down the mount, of His approaching death and resurrection. "We have a more sure word of prophecy,"—a fuller revelation of divine truth; the principles of our salvation are more clearly established; the Holy Spirit is given to us in larger measure; and we can understand better than could the apostles, had they even been awake, the things of the kingdom of God, of which Moses and Elijah discoursed as "they spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." And the glory of Christ seen in the sanctuary is not a less desirable thing to behold than His Transfiguration upon Tabor or Hermon. Let us appreciate our privileges. Others have not the blessings we possess, or have them in smaller measure. Let us always remember that it is good for us to be here; and let our gratitude go forth to Him who so often favors us above others with displays of His grace when,

> "Heaven comes down our souls to greet,
> And glory crowns the Mercy Seat."

Once more, Peter's words may mark his discernment of an important event in our Lord's ministry. He had been accustomed to see miracles, as he followed Him "who went about doing good." Here, however, was a surpassing wonder. The Son of man appears not in His humiliation, but assumes something of the glory He had for a

time laid aside. The giver of the Law and the restorer of the Law appear with Him in glory. A voice from heaven attests His divine claims; and the command is given, "Hear ye Him!"

It was indeed an important stage of our Savior's career.

"This weighty event," says Alford, "formed the solemn installation of our Lord to His sufferings and their result." It may be called the meridian of His day of earthly labor. As at the beginning of His ministry a voice from heaven proclaimed, "This is my Beloved Son," and a voice at the close answered the prayer, "Father, glorify Thy name;" so, in the full tide of His redeeming work, the heavenly voice is heard, setting the seal of divine approval upon Him, as the Messiah whom God has sent. Here begins the second grand stage of His life-work. From this time forward the shadows of the cross fell more heavily upon His pathway. He spoke to His disciples more plainly of His approaching sufferings and sought to prepare them, as they were able to bear His words, for the place they must assume in His heavenly kingdom.

We are far from intimating that the true significance of this unique scene was discerned by Peter. But some impressions, vague and shadowy as they were, he must have received. He understood not what the Transfiguration meant; but he knew it was not without significance; and even if he

wrongly imagined it to be the inauguration of the temporal reign of the Messiah, he was right in esteeming it good to be present, and thus to be in a measure prepared for the future developments of the kingdom of Christ upon the earth. More than thirty years after this event Peter writes of it as having stamped itself indelibly upon His mind,— "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; but were eye-witnesses of His Majesty; for He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount" (2 Pet. i: 17, 18).

It is indeed a privilege to witness any marked display of divine power that may indicate a forward movement in the Church of God. And if ever the signs of the times claimed the discernment of men, they do now. These are days when God is working wonders in the earth. Not only are the minds of men stirred to unusual activity, not only are discovery and invention and enterprise making giant strides in material things; but Providence is marshalling all the resources of the earth and combining all the forces that have influence in society to carry out His vast designs. Great events have occurred within our memory that have had

direct, though entirely unlooked for, bearing upon the interests of the Church. We need not rehearse the wonderful story of man's conquest over the forces of nature in this age, when earth, air and sea have so largely given up their secrets. With so many amazing attainments already made, we may yet be only on the frontiers of discovery; and Sir Isaac Newton's modest claim to be only a gatherer of shells on the sea-shore may be repeated by our most advanced scientists. This only we may say with confidence, that all these things are part of the divine plan to secure the glory of the Church, and that, far beyond the thoughts of men, God will make use of them for the advancement of His kingdom.

We live in the great missionary age. Now, as never before, is Zion called upon to "lengthen her cords and strengthen her stakes" (Isa. liv: 1). And though the nations are now in the commotion of almost universal war, and the wisest Statesman cannot predict the issue, and all missionary enterprises present new obstacles that try our faith, we are well assured that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church, and, even through the unhappy conflicts of men "deliverance and enlargement shall arise" (Esther iv: 14).

It is good to live in these days, even though scoffers walking after their own lusts say, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Pet. iii: 2, 4). It is good to read with discerning eyes the opening

pages of the Book of Providence, and though the significance of the vision may be hidden from us, be so impressed with the conviction that Christ is being glorified in the earth that we shall be prepared for our place in His kingdom when He calls us to any service.

The best point of view from which to watch the movements of history is the church of God. "O thou, that bringest good tidings to Zion, get Thee up on a high mountain" (Isa. xl:9, Am. R. V). There are many things in Providence that we cannot understand. There are movements forward and backward, as in complicated machinery. There are mysteries that baffle our understanding, and evils that try our faith. There are new instruments from time to time discovered in the hands of God of which we cannot see the use; and sometimes we blindly judge that they have no use; but if we carefully study the progress of events we shall catch such glimpses of the purposes of grace as will convince us that not one useless thing has transpired and not one instrument fashioned but has its place in the far-reaching plans of God for the progress of Zion. It is the past only that is luminous. Principles are slowly grasped. We understand the ancient world better than the ancients did. Better histories of Greece and Rome have been written in the present generation than the scholarship of the world had been able before to produce; and the Church of God understands

to-day more clearly the principles of the kingdom of heaven, and has an ampler vision of the glory yet to be than any previous age has known.

It is good to be with the army of the living God, when the great Captain of our salvation is leading it on to triumph. It is good to be in sympathy with His cause, though our understanding of many things is so imperfect; for by and by we shall see clearly, and I doubt not shall discern that even the visible transfiguration of our Lord in Galilee was not a more glorious thing to see than the glory of Christ in the earth in the days in which we live. These are times when all the various activities of the Church, in missions, brotherhood fellowship, young people's societies, social reforms and wide spread relief may find scope and opportunity as never before. "It is good for us to be here!"

One other possible explanation of the text is adopted by Meyer. It is fortunate that we disciples are here. Peter's controlling impulse may have been to be of service. And his additional suggestion, "Let us make here three tabernacles" seems to give some support to the rendition. Though confused and amazed, Peter desired to be useful. He may have thought that the construction of leafy booths would be desirable, if the heavenly visitors were to remain, or at least that thus the disciples might show their willingness to honor their Lord and them. But even if He proposes what he would not have thought of had his

faculties been more alert, he evinces his readiness to do something that should be acceptable to his Master. And we may accept this as our closing lesson. It is well to be so impressed with the presence of Jesus in the sanctuary that we shall inquire, like Paul, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" We may well question the religious emotion that evaporates when the congregation melts into the multitude of the world, and the impressions of the sanctuary are forgotten. It is good for us to be here. Here, in the Church of the living God, as it exists among men. Here in the sacramental host of God's elect. Here, in the great family of which God is the Head and Jesus the Elder Brother, and all are one! In this day, when the call for enlistment is so insistent, and the opportunities of service are so abundant, it is good for us to be here.

Cast thy Bread upon the waters,
 Give to all Christ's hungry poor.
Think not aught too mean to offer,
 Which He blesses, of thy store.

Give, then, of thy worldly substance,
 Fear not thou shalt go unfed;
He who feeds the fowls of heaven
 Will supply thy daily bread.

Break the Bread of Life to others.
 Give, as Christ has given to thee;
Though thy store seem small and worthless,
 He'll increase it wondrously.

Crowds cry, perishing with hunger,
 "Who will show us any good?"
Show them Christ, the Bread of Heaven;
 Feed them with this heavenly food.

Everything you do for Jesus,
 Humble though the service be,
Helps some soul to feed upon Him;
 Hence the Lord hath need of thee!

Ours the service, His the blessing;
 Thus the multitudes we feed;
Thus the Master still is working
 Miracles of grace indeed.

J. G. L.

IX

FORGIVEN AND LOVING MUCH

THE only true accusation the enemies of Jesus ever brought against Him is His crowning glory; "This man receiveth sinners."

Immediately after a wonderful discourse of our Lord, which closed with the memorable words, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," occurred the scene to which we now give our attention. Let us see Jesus rejoicing in the restoration of the fallen and lost.

Perhaps the "Woman that was a sinner" heard from the lips of the Master this gracious invitation; and, full of penitence and gratitude, embraced this her first opportunity to show love for the Savior.

A Pharisee "who bore the very common name of Simon," invited Jesus to dine with him. What his motive was in so doing is not clear. He certainly was not a sincere friend of our Lord. Perhaps he was merely curious to see Him at nearer view. Perhaps he wanted to make up his own mind as to the merits of His claims, and in the

meantime, while he was willing to show Jesus a measure of favor, he would not compromise his own dignity and standing by offering more than the barest civilities to his guest. His hospitality was not free and liberal, but condescending, patronizing and scanty. Indeed little more was done than to admit our Lord to a place at the table of the great man.

No kiss of welcome greeted Him. No water was brought to refresh His weary feet, as the dusty sandals were laid aside. No sweet smelling perfume anointed His head.

It could not but be apparent to the other guests, and to the lookers on that He whom even Simon called " Master " was treated with studied neglect.

" An Englishman's house is his castle." It is not so in the Orient, and especially when a great feast was made the host was forced to keep open doors. None approached the table but invited guests, but a great company of the poor was admitted about the doors, and to them was consigned freely whatever was left after the feast was ended.

Among the throng that came thus to Simon's house, on this occasion was one whose presence was more than undesired. It was offensive. " A woman that was a sinner," apparently well known in the city, finding that Jesus was dining at the Pharisee's house, pressed her way into the room hoping for some opportunity of manifesting her love.

Perhaps she had witnessed, with sorrow and regret the indignity done the Savior by His host, and resolved to perform the neglected service; and so she hastens home and seizes the most costly thing in her possession, an Alabastrum, a vessel filled with precious perfume, and returns, hoping to find some way to pour it upon the head of Jesus.

But as the company sat, or rather reclined, at the table, she could not approach near enough for this. For the Roman custom of resting at meal-time upon a triclinium, or dinner-bed, now prevailed among the Jews, and was doubtless practiced upon this occasion. Half lying thus upon the left arm, with the head toward the table, the feet of the guests were thrown behind, so that the servants might easily perform the office of washing them.

If the woman may not anoint the head of Jesus she may at least reach His feet, and so she approaches from behind. But as she bends over to perform this lowly act of grateful homage, undeterred by the forbidding looks of the Pharisee, though doubtless disturbed by them, her pent up emotions can no longer be controlled. Thoughts of all that she has been, and of what Jesus has become to her, quite overcome her, and with mingled joy and sorrow, the tears of the penitent, falling in a plentiful shower, wash the feet she had come to anoint.

She is not repulsed, and she ventures upon a further service. With her long flowing hair, her only towel, she wipes away her fallen tears; she kisses the feet of Him who has bidden her come to Him for rest, and then pours the costly nard upon them.

Jesus had not turned around as yet, but He well knew who was performing this grateful service.

He could read, too, the thoughts of Simon, who perhaps sat opposite, though with studied unconcern the Pharisee may have striven to recover himself and to compose his countenance.

And, without appearing to observe what had been done, or to have any reference to it, the great Teacher propounded a simple question of social life. "There was a certain creditor, who had two debtors. The one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore which will love him most."

There is a touch of superciliousness in Simon's reply—as if this were child's play—an idle question for one to propose who claimed to be a great prophet and the Master of Israel.

And he answers readily enough, not seeing the pitfall of the little parable. The debtor who was forgiven five hundred pence might be expected to love more than he whose debt was only one-tenth that amount.

As little did David anticipate Nathan's applica-

tion, "Thou art the man," as did Simon expect our Lord's reply: "Thou hast rightly judged." Then came the moral of the simple tale, "couched," as Farrar remarks, "in that rhythmic utterance of antithetic parallelism which our Lord adopted in His loftier teachings, appealing like the poetry of their own prophets to these Jewish hearers—the sterner for its very gentleness."

Our Lord turned full upon the penitent who was perhaps still kneeling at His feet. Confused and abashed as she doubtless was at having the attention of the whole company directed to her, it was with increasing joy and gladness that she heard the Savior speak. She could, as easily as we, supply the words between the lines in our Lord's address—"Simon, seest thou this woman? (so far removed in the social scale from thyself). I entered thy house (at thine own invitation); thou gavest me no water for my feet; (though even the poorest hosts are accustomed to offer this courtesy to their guests)—but she (because she could not otherwise perform the service) hath washed my feet with tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss (the customary greeting) but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with (even common olive) oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with (precious) ointment. Wherefore I say unto you, her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved

much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

And He said unto her—"Thy sins are forgiven." And then that He might show that forgiveness was not purchased by the much love, He points to the condition in herself that warranted His unqualified declaration of pardon—"Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." We are not told what effect this reply had upon Simon; but the guests, whether in admiring surprise or in disapprobation, we know not, began to muse in their hearts, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" We hear no more of this woman. Her name is not given. Tradition and popular interpretation have indeed long identified her with Mary of Magdala, out of whom our Lord cast seven devils, and who afterward, with other women, ministered to Him of her substance. But it is quite unlikely that they were the same persons.

When Luke mentions "Mary called Magdalene" in the beginning of the next chapter, he introduces her as a new and separate character.

Still more inexcusable is the blunder which confounds Mary the sister of Lazarus, who anointed the feet of Jesus at Bethany with "the woman that was a sinner." The scene of this anointing was at the house of Simon the Pharisee, in Galilee; the second anointing, long subsequent to this, was at the house of Simon the Leper, at Bethany (Matt. xxvi: 6).

Nor need we be misled by the name Simon, occurring in each narrative. There was a large family of Simons. They may be called the Smiths of the Gospels; while Judas is by no means a singular name, even among the apostles.

Sir Edwin Arnold in his poem, "The Light of the World," not only adopts the baseless tradition of the Dark Ages which affixes a stain to the name of Mary Magdalene, but assumes that Mary of Bethany is also the same person—thus blending in one character three different individuals, representing three most distinct types of womanhood. Yet this may surprise us less than to find Professor David Smith in "The Days of His Flesh" accepting the same verdict.

We carefully distinguish between these three women. One came to Christ burdened with the consciousness of sin. She sought pardon, and received it. Jesus said to her "Go, in peace." He did not bid her to come after Him as one of His attendants. That was the woman that was a sinner of the text, who loved much—we do not know her name, and have no right to call her Mary.

The second woman came to Christ for healing;—for demoniacal possessions implied only infirmity and not guilt—and Christ healed her; and moved with gratitude she followed Him and ministered to Him of her substance. That was Mary Magdalene.

The third woman, the sister of Lazarus and

Martha, was drawn to Christ by her love of the truth. She chose the better part, and delighted to sit at the feet of Him who was the honored guest in her home, and hear His words. That was Mary of Bethany.

Disassociating then this "woman that was a sinner" from the two Marys of subsequent history, let us gather up the lessons we may learn from her touching interview with Jesus.

1. Jesus Christ is accessible.

He never hid Himself, when He was on earth, from any earnest seeker. Even when beyond the borders of Israel He entered into a house and would have no man know it, "He could not be hid," when a heathen woman pressed for a blessing upon her afflicted child.

Even when He had retired for rest, after the busy toils of preaching and of healing, He could not deny the importunate multitude that appealed to His compassion, as sheep, having no shepherd.

It was only from the self-seeking, pride and unbelief of men that He withdrew. He was a man of the people. He was willing to be known as "a friend of publicans and sinners." He brushed away all artificial barriers—all class distinctions—that forbade his mingling with rich and poor alike so far as they would receive Him. The common people heard Him gladly, and even the Publicans and harlots many of them entered the kingdom, won by His faithful, loving ministry. The Scribes

and Pharisees would have been welcomed as freely, had they not been too full of themselves to come to Him as sinners.

Never did a public teacher mingle more freely with His disciples—never was a skillful physician more ready to relieve distress than was Jesus of Nazareth.

Let the sin burdened come to Him. Yet it is a remark worth oft repeating that we have no recorded instance of His inviting any one to come to Him for bodily healing. He never turned a single applicant away. But He made prominent the great end of His mission to heal the sin-sick souls of men rather than their bodies, by urging them everywhere to come to Him for pardon and for rest. The blessing He delighted most to confer was that bestowed upon this sinful woman. "Thy sins are forgiven." "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." Surely then He who never turned away those smitten with bodily maladies, though we have no recorded instance of his taking the initiative in bidding them seek healing of Him —unless we except the case of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda—will never turn a penitent seeker away who comes to Him encouraged by His multiplied, tender and urgent invitations.

No matter how far you have wandered—how many are your sins—how aggravated your offenses —how deep your sense of unworthiness and of guilt, there stands the promise gleaming in letters

of gold over the open door of Christ's love—"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

2. Let us learn that no obstacles can prevent a sinner from finding pardon in Christ, who is earnestly bent upon obtaining it. This world is full of enemies to grace. Many are they who will not enter into life themselves but who will hinder those who would enter. Well does Bunyan represent Christian as he was about to enter the wicket gate, as being shot at by the archers of the Evil one.

Says a pithy writer, "There never is a knock at heaven's gate but it sounds through hell, and devils come out to silence it." "Whenever a soul is striving for heaven, or heaven striving for a soul, which is but another side of the same truth, there are two worlds at strife." *

An ungodly world throws its whole influence against every sinner that is pressing into the kingdom. Often a man's foes are they of his own household—for the worldly members of a family are not pleased to have one of their number turn Christian—and sometimes sarcasm, scorn and petty annoyances must be endured from dearly loved friends by those who seek refuge in Christ. But most marvelous of all is the opposition that sometimes meets awakened sinners on the part of the professed disciples of Christ. The followers of our Lord rebuked Blind Bartimeus for crying

*Dr. Hoge, "Blind Bartimeus," p. 116.

out for mercy. They would have had Him send the Syrophœnician woman away unheard. They would even have driven away the little children that nestled in His protecting arms! And this Simon of Galilee was a member of the Jewish Church. How scornful was his attitude toward the lowly penitent that found refuge at the Savior's feet! He who had no welcome for the Savior of sinners in his home had no pity in his heart for the sinner who sought Him there.

But notwithstanding every opposition the soul that is bent upon obtaining salvation shall find it. Zaccheus triumphed over obstacles and placed himself in the Savior's way. The Paralytic found a way to Him even through the roof of the house. This poor woman came to Him tho' all society rose up to oppose her, and tho' the very owner of the house in which the Master was would have driven her forth unblessed.

The Savior of sinners threw the ample shield of His protection and love about her and she was safe. So will every soul find refuge in Him, who undeterred by the world's criticisms, the world's allurements, or even the opposition of professing Christians, seeks Him with the humble cry for mercy.

3. We should learn that the way to cultivate love for Christ in our hearts is to cultivate appreciation of what He has done for us. We are not to understand our Savior's little parable as

teaching that Simon had been forgiven either much or little. It was not what his sins were, as contrasted with those of the woman's, but what he thought about them, as contrasted with what the poor woman thought about her own, that served to point the moral of the tale. She knew that she was a sinner. She mourned over her sins—She believed the promises of the Gospel—She trusted in the mercy of Jesus—She found joy and peace in believing—and her heart overflowed with love because she felt that she had been forgiven much.

Simon in the sight of God may have been just as great a sinner—though his sins were of a different character—but full of pride—self-justification and self-merit—he felt that he had little need of divine forgiveness, and hence there was in his heart little love.

We wrong our own souls when we belittle the sins that we believe our Savior's pardon has blotted out. What wonder our hearts grow cold toward Him when we come to think that we do not owe Him much? That He has had less to forgive in us than in other sinners, and that so far as we are concerned, we might almost have been saved without Him, by our pure goodness of heart or blamelessness of life or by our good intentions!

There is a habit of introspection indeed that is to be condemned. It is not profitable to brood over our sins until the heart grows sick and the spirit is in despair and life is made miserable, and

all helpful sympathies with the sorrows of others evaporate in the fumes of our mistaken sacrifice.

The teaching of our Savior here is not "remember your sins and be miserable," but "remember your sins and be happy in love." Whenever you go into the dark cavern of the past, take Christ with you. And as you see the pits from which His love has drawn you, and discern now more clearly how, here and there "your feet were almost gone," and how His mercy held you up when you were slipping, you will grasp more firmly that loving hand that holds you still. And learning more and more how much you owe, and how much you have been forgiven, the bond that binds you to Him will become closer and stronger.

Forgiveness means more than final salvation. The better you understand forgiveness the more will you realize that you need it—and know that you possess it—and this sense of forgiveness will beget love; and this sense of need will beget humility, and your life will be filled with a peace and joy that passes all understanding.

When we enter heaven at last the great wonder of our hearts will not be that Manasseh could be saved, or that Saul of Tarsus could be saved, or that the dying thief could be saved, or that the woman that was a sinner could be saved, but each one of us with a heart overflowing with love, because we then for the first time fully appreciate how much we owe to Christ in the pardon of our

sins, will say " The wonder of wonders is that *I* am saved."

"Witness, all ye hosts of heaven,
My Redeemer's tenderness!
Love I much? I'm much forgiven;
I'm a miracle of grace."

Jesus! the very thought is sweet;
In that dear name all heart-joys meet;
But sweeter than the honey far,
The glimpses of His presence are.

No word is sung more sweet than this,
No name is heard more full of bliss,
No thought brings sweeter comfort nigh
Than Jesus, Son of God most high.

No tongue of mortal can express,
No letters write its blessedness;
Alone, who hath thee in his heart,
Knows, love of Jesus, what thou art!

Jesus, the hope of souls forlorn!
How good to them for sin who mourn!
To them that seek thee, Oh, how kind!
But what art thou to them that find?

O Jesus, King of wondrous might!
O Victor, glorious from the fight!
Sweetness that may not be expressed,
And altogether loveliest!

Translation of an old Latin Hymn, by St. Bernard, A.D., 115.

X

ANOINTED AT BETHANY

SIX days before the Passover our Lord came to Bethany. This was the home of Lazarus and his two sisters. Jesus was well known in the village having been before this the guest of this interesting household—and especially was His fame established there since the resurrection of Lazarus. His coming at this time therefore awakened more than ordinary interest and four days after His arrival, two days before the Passover, a feast was made in His honor at the house of Simon the Leper. Who this Simon was we do not know. He may have been the father or the husband of Martha. He may have been healed of his leprosy by Jesus. He may have left Martha a widow. All this is mere conjecture, but Martha appears entirely at home in the house, busied in the undisputed service that she loved, while Mary as of old lingered near the Savior's feet. Lazarus was conspicuous among them that sat at meat, for his recent resurrection both endeared him the more to his own little family and illustrated the power of the Prophet whom they all delighted to honor.

While the company sat—or rather reclined—at the table, Mary anointed both the head and the feet of Jesus with a costly ointment, doubtless with tokens of tender affection which were not unbecoming in a disciple who had already been admitted to loving intimacy with the Master and whose warm gratitude for a brother's restoration thus sought expression. The term alabaster-box is misleading. There is no word for box in the Greek text. The vessel in which the ointment was contained was an alabastrum—so-called from the material of which it was formed—in shape like a vial and sealed at the top. Usually but a drop at a time was suffered to escape; but Mary broke the seal, or the narrow neck of the bottle, and poured out the precious contents without stint. We need to consider Eastern manners to understand this scene. In Oriental lands perfumes and highly scented ointments were used with a profusion far beyond our Western customs or tastes. The Bible reveals much of this fondness for spices and sweet odors and anointings.

There was no exception taken to Mary's act as unusual or inappropriate. The only murmuring was at the apparent lavishness of the offering. Judas, who bore the purse, and whose covetous eyes were open to all possible means of peculation, exclaimed in well-simulated, pious horror—"Why was not this ointment sold for more than 300 pence and given to the poor?" And so unaccustomed

are men to independent thought that the other disciples joined in the condemnation.

It was indeed a goodly offering and is suggestive of the wealth of the family. When we remember that Philip estimated that two hundred pence would nearly suffice to buy food for five thousand persons, we may esteem three hundred pence a costly price for a single pound of perfumery. Yet our Savior justifies Mary's act and throws the shield of His protection about her before the company, as He had once before vindicated her from Martha's censorious complaint.

"Let her alone. Why trouble ye the woman? For she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good; but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could. She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Perhaps we can better understand the motives that impelled Mary to this unusual service if we discern not merely her gratitude and affection, but her conspicuous faith. It may not be too much to say that this humble disciple understood better than even the apostles of our Lord His frequent revelations concerning His approaching death.

Jesus had spoken plainly to others of His suffer-

ings—and while He had not told her more than others as she sat at His feet, her simple faith may have believed His words, when others, who ought perhaps to have understood them better, were staggered by them. And our Savior may mean to declare the actual intention of Mary in the words, "She is come beforehand to anoint my body to the burying."

What she could not hope to do after the Savior's death, since He had foretold that He must die by violence, she would do beforehand—and thus evince both her faith and her devotion.

Four things we desire to notice in this offering of Mary:

Its costliness: It was very precious ointment.

Its timeliness: It was given on the only available occasion for the Savior's burial.

Its acceptability: Jesus said, "She hath done what she could."

Its far reaching fame and influence: Wherever the Gospel is spoken of throughout the whole world her Memorial is found.

And, first, let us observe that this was no mean offering. Anointings among the Jews were common enough, but not with ointment so precious and in such abundance. It was perhaps the spikenard of India, not only precious but pure; fit for a monarch's coronation. It was for one who had the highest claim upon her devotion that Mary brought her tribute of love, and she felt like David when

preparing for the temple building—"I will not offer unto the Lord of that which doth cost me nothing."

Had Mary been poor, a less valuable offering might have expressed her feelings just as truly and as acceptably to Jesus—for we remember His commendation of the poor woman who cast two mites into the treasury—being all her living. But two mites expended by a wealthy woman in her Savior's honor would have been mean indeed. That it is done for Christ is enough to vindicate the lavishness of the most costly offering ever laid at His feet, and to dignify the humblest gift into the quality of a royal service. The Church has witnessed many a princely benefaction since Mary's day— And examples of munificent giving to the cause of Christ, when bestowed with Mary's faith and in Mary's spirit, are gratifying to all who love the Lord, as they are also pleasing to Him. But it needs not abundance of means to give a worthy offering to Jesus. That only is a costly offering that is the fruit of self-denial.

It is indeed a contemptible gift when a professed follower of Jesus drops dimes or even nickels into the contribution plate when a collection is taken for some benevolent object, while he spends dollars for luxuries and even superfluities; but a penny is not mean from any one who must practice self-denial to give frequently even so much as this. No thoughtless contributor, who care-

lessly drops a coin into a Church collection, because he is expected to give something, has any share in Mary's devotion—who gave because she loved to give, and gave the best she had.

There are those who give to Christ in other forms than that of worldly substance. That life that Polycarp joyfully laid down in martyrdom for the Lord whom he would not live to deny; that life that Elliott spent among savage Indians; that life that John G. Paton spent in the isolation of the New Hebrides; that life that many a devoted missionary is to-day pouring out in self-sacrifice in heathen lands for Christ—all these are alabastrums of very precious ointment—offerings that cost, and are grateful as a sweet-smelling savor to Him for whom they are joyfully made.

There are not wanting those in every age who cry, in the spirit of the traitor, at every offering made in Christ's name, "To what purpose is this waste?" The claims of the poor are often urged by those who conspicuously fail by their own benevolence to demonstrate that they care for the poor. It is easy to make objections to the form in which any loving heart chooses to express its devotion to Christ. "What a mad scheme is this of Haldene's!" said many in England, when one hundred years ago a magnificent estate was sold and the proceeds of the sale devoted to Christian missions in India. "How many poor people

might that money have fed and clothed." * Yet perhaps the poor received a greater blessing than would have been theirs had the princely offering been devoted solely to their bodily relief.

Our Savior says nothing in disparagement of that benevolence that seeks to lighten the burdens of poverty. "The poor ye have always with you." But because we remember this duty we must not forget another as imperative. While we feed the hungry with the bread of this life we must not forget the spiritual needs of the perishing at home and abroad.

Nor may we forget that the Church of Christ is the source of all the world's boasted charities—that the motives that impel true benevolence into activity are operative chiefly as the gospel of our Savior flourishes—and that to give lovingly in any way to strengthen His cause is to insure the relief of the poor whom the gospel forbids its followers to forget. Yet the world's cold and calculating and often selfish interest in Christian giving regards the stream as more important than the fountain!

But that our offerings may be justified, even in unusual form, we may see illustrated as we consider, secondly, the timeliness of Mary's anointing. It was for the Savior's burial that she brought the precious unguent. Whether her superior faith discerned all that His approaching death involved or not, she had good reason to know that what she did

* Hanna's "Life of Christ," II, 346.

to testify her devotion must be soon done. She found and embraced her opportunity.

We may see in her action and in our Lord's words, that costly offerings, even when apparently wasteful and inappropriate, may be justified partly by the motive of duty itself, which prompts them, and partly by the transient opportunity of doing that which must be done soon, or not at all.

The claims of the poor are recognized by our Lord—but here was an opportunity for a service that could only once be accomplished. And the fact that such a life was to be offered, in such a death and for such an end, fully justifies the most costly offering love can bring to show its faith and its sympathy. The poor might be relieved many times before and after the crucifixion. Christ's body was anointed but once for burial.

There are occasions that call for unusual sacrifice of our means for Christ's cause, when it is our privilege to give as we may not always do. And the opportunity of doing something that shall bring honor to our Lord, and prove a lasting blessing to mankind may justify and even demand an offering far beyond our usual benefactions to the poor.

To give an offering that costs when the question of establishing the Church of Christ in a community in strength or in lingering weakness may be virtually decided upon by the liberality displayed upon a certain occasion—as when a church debt is to be raised—or a pastor secured—or a church is to

be built or refurnished—to respond with a donation that marks great self-denial when a new institution is to be set upon its feet, whose influence, if it be founded wisely, promises to be wide and far reaching in time—to support some faithful toiler in mission work, whose work will soon be over—all this is to break the Alabastrum for Christ. And the fact that the value of what we are called to do often depends upon our seizing present yet fleeting opportunities justifies us in an expenditure that to less reflecting minds may be judged wastefulness.

While writing these lines my heart has been saddened by the news in a Denver paper of the death of a Christian philanthropist who was not content to respond to calls that were forced upon him; but who, like Mary of Bethany, sought opportunity to do what he could. Forced to Colorado by failing health, he found in the neglected youth of a growing city the privilege he coveted of showing his love for Christ. He gathered the children who were roaming the streets into a Mission Sunday School. He associated others with him in his good work. He gave with unstinted liberality of his means. He won the love of a very large community of young people by his devotion to their interests, and in his will he provided for the support of the school he had founded, that it might be thoroughly equipped with all that could make it a power for good in that important city in coming

years. There were those doubtless in Denver, as they watched Mr. Crane's zeal in building, and in otherwise expending his means, who said "To what purpose is this waste? How many poor, and how many invalids this money might have relieved!"—Yet, while always liberal to the poor, this far-sighted friend of the Master saw something that must be done for Him at once, or never done so well or at all. The children in whom He saw His loving Lord must be gathered early into His fold, or ripen in sin which the united efforts of all the churches of a great city could not arrest. And surely the opportunity is afforded many a loving disciple of Jesus in any community—it may be with smaller means and with less observance—to "go and do likewise."

It was a delicious and delicate fragrance that immediately diffused itself through the whole house as Mary poured the costly ointment upon the Savior's person; and taking her hair, which is woman's glory, tenderly and lovingly wiped His feet. She stood behind Him, in speechless devotion, but He needed not to be told who it was that touched Him, nor what was the significance of the service she thus rendered. And more acceptable to Him than was the odor to the senses of the assembled guests was the vital savor of piety that marked the holy action.

"She hath done what she could!" What higher meed of approval could any disciple claim?

Yet that this shall be awarded to all who lovingly devote their service to Christ's cause we have the Master's own explicit testimony.

It is not every one who can afford a gift so expensive and so rare. Nor are conspicuous opportunities of performing service for Jesus equally offered to all. But a cup of cold water any one may give in Christ's name—and in the walks of daily life may be found a thousand occasions of multiplying deeds of love that shall be as sweet fragrance to Him who has said "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

We can scarcely wonder then in view of all that has been said, at the far reaching fame and influence of Mary's offering. The penetrating power of odoriferous molecules, it is well known, is very remarkable. Haller kept for forty years papers perfumed with one grain of ambergris. After this time the odor was as strong as ever. The house of Simon was filled with the odor of Mary's ointment—but the Church of God, which is a larger house, has been filled ever since with a fragrance that has delighted the whole family in heaven and on earth.

How strikingly has our Lord's prediction been fulfilled! "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her!" We are fulfilling His words

to-day. Indeed it would seem that every gospel teacher is under commission from the Master to rehearse a story that He has linked so inseparably with the very gospel itself and that has in it such precious lessons.

It is of the nature of Christian influence to propagate itself in undying power for good. Andrew brought his brother Simon to Jesus—and Simon Peter won three thousand souls for Christ upon the day of Pentecost; and the multiplying fruit of that wonderful day only eternity can reveal. And so Andrew's work still goes on.

Yet Mary received a mention and a memorial—a wide spread reputation—an unending remembrance—that has been accorded to no other believer in Bible times.

This is the sole occasion in which Jesus ever spoke of the after-fame of any service done for Him—and this is no light proof of the illustrious faith that seized the import of His teachings concerning His death. And this memorial of Mary will be the more valuable to us if it shall incite us to follow and obtain "like precious faith."

Chrysostom, when discoursing upon this incident said—"While the victories of many kings and generals are lost in silence, and many who have founded states and reduced nations to subjection, are not known by reputation or by name, the pouring of ointment by this woman is celebrated throughout the whole world. Time hath passed

away, but the memory of the deed she did hath not waned. But Persians and Indians and Scythians and Thracians and the race of the Mauritanians, and they who inhabit the British Isles, publish abroad an act which was done in Judea privately in a house, by a woman." "Fourteen hundred years have passed and gone," says Dr. Hanna in quoting this passage, "since in the great Church of St. Sophia at Constantinople, Chrysostom uttered these words, referring to the British isles as one of the remotest places of the then known world. The centuries that have rolled by since then have witnessed many a revolution, not the least wonderful among them the place that these British isles now occupy, but still wider and wider is the tale of Mary's anointing of her Master being told, the fragrance of the ointment spreading, yet losing nothing of its sweetness, such fresh vitality, such self-preserving power, lodging in a simple act of pure and fervid love." *

Mary's precise opportunity will never be accorded to another. Mary's memorial may not be yours—But other service you may render that shall be as truly done to Christ and as pleasing in His sight—And this shall be your eternal memorial "That your names are written in heaven!" (Luke x: 20).

* "Life of Christ," Vol. II, p. 350.

Three women crept at break of day
A'grope along the shadowy way,
Where Joseph's tomb and garden lay.

Each on her throbbing bosom bore
A burden of such fragrant store
As never there had lain before.

Spices, the purest, richest, best,
That e'er the musty East possessed,
From Ind to Araby-the-Blest.

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Christ did not need their gifts;—and yet,
Did either Mary once regret
Her offering?—Did Salome fret?

Myrrh-Bearers still,—at home, abroad,
What paths have holy women trod,
Burdened with votive gifts for God,—

Rare gifts, whose chiefest worth was priced
By this one thought, that all sufficed;—
Their spices had been bruised for Christ!

MARGARET J. PRESTON.

XI

OUR LORD'S SPIRITUAL FAMILY

SOME of the most significant sayings of our Savior were called forth by interruptions in His discourses. The parable of the Rich Fool sprung out of the untimely request of a covetous hearer that Jesus would take sides with him in a family dispute over an inheritance. As in the fissures of the rocks, rent by the volcanic fires of a by-gone age, may now be found some of the most beautiful mountain trees and flowers, so out of these rent discourses of our Lord have sprung teachings that are impressive and valuable.*

Let us consider another of these detached sayings that have their source in interruption. It will bring before us a peculiar phase of our Savior's joy. While Jesus was talking to the multitude in a private house, His mother and His brethren, standing without, sent a message to Him that they desired to speak to Him. We do not know what prompted them to make this request. No doubt their motives were good, and presumably they were unselfish. Solicitude for His safety is the most

* The suggestion is from Dr. Arnot.

plausible explanation we can find. He had but lately broken with the Pharisees. The news had quickly spread. His friends said, "He is beside Himself." His nearer relatives, too, were filled with alarm; and Mary, His mother, seemed to feel the prophetic sword pierce through her own soul. Swayed by motives of policy, and forgetful of the words in the Temple, which she had laid up and pondered in her heart, she thinks now to interpose and save Him from the ruin He is precipitating for Himself. These family friends of Jesus think He does not Himself appreciate the dangers to which He is exposed. They would put Him on His guard, or withdraw Him to a place of safety; and they cannot wait until He finishes with the people, lest at any moment He may say or do something that shall fan the rising opposition into the white heat of a consuming fire. Like His disciples on other occasions they presume to instruct Him. His answer rebukes at once their presumption and their worldly policy, while it defines the intimate relationship that exists between Him and all who are found in harmony with the divine will, "My mother and my brethren are these who hear the word of God and do it."

It is a sufficient answer to those who assign to Mary, the mother of our Lord, "the place of a goddess in the Roman mythology," that she, on the one hand does not here assert her authority over her divine Son, and that He on the other, does

not hesitate gently to rebuke her, as He did in Cana of Galilee, at the Marriage Feast.

She does not here command, but sends a message to Jesus. He apparently does not even grant her request for an interview. It was important that His own family, as well as the multitude, should understand that His relations to His mother and His brethren were not on the same footing with those of other men; and that even the claims of kindred were to be subordinated to His divine calling.

We may learn this lesson in passing, that when we meet with hindrances and obstructions in the path of duty, even when they have their source in the solicitude of our kindred, we are warranted in disregarding them. Lesser claims must yield to greater. Even a brother, a sister, a mother must have less regard than Christ. Our duty to God must have the preference. A parent has no right to command our obedience in anything that contravenes the will of God. It is hard, sometimes, to make the choice between earthly and heavenly authority; but we have divine warrant for holding that "we ought to obey God rather than men." And our Savior has said, "Whoso loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me."

Yet we are to be careful, on the other hand, not to make so-called religious duties an excuse for neglecting our kindred; for abating natural affection, showing disrespect to parents, or manifesting

impatience with those who, however wrong they may be in their opposition, have a right to our consideration and esteem. Our Lord does not here disparage His mother or His brethren. He does not mean to disown them. Only He affirms the superior claims of His heavenly Father, whose will He was seeking to fulfill, and He makes the earthly relationship a standard of comparison by which He may declare His love for all who will be His disciples.

It is as if He had said, in answer to the one who told Him, "Behold Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without," "You recognize my affection for my kindred. Let this illustrate my love for my larger circle of true believers. I have another family,—a spiritual household. It embraces all who love to do the will of God. My mother is indeed highly favored and has been called blessed among women; but rather blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it. My brothers according to the flesh are honored and beloved; but the least and humblest among men may share equal privileges, 'For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother.'"

Matthew and Mark have preserved for us a picture of our Lord's attitude upon this occasion. "He looked round upon them which sat about Him." Oh gaze of affectionate and tender recognition! How much may be expressed in a look!

He looked round, as if seeking His own; and when His eyes lit upon them He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, as if to point them out to others, and said, "Behold, my mother and my brethren." It was as if He said, "I am not bound as are other men to a single household; but embrace as equally dear to me all who do the will of my Father in heaven."

Let us consider the condition upon which we may become members of Christ's spiritual household, and the privileges of this connection.

Will controls all intelligent action. The only question is whose will shall control. Ungodly men do the will of the Evil One. They are "taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tim. ii:26). Weak men do the will of others. The maxims of society have more weight with them than the law of God. Fear or favor easily moves them. They have not the courage to say "We ought to obey God rather than men." Self-willed men are a law unto themselves. They do not recognize God's authority. They never bow their knees to Him in prayer. They never inquire what He would have them do. They follow, so far as possible, the bent of their own wishes. They are self-indulgent, self-satisfied, "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."

In contrast with all this is character of the true Christian. The language of his heart is, "Not my will, O God, but Thine be done." He delights

in God's holy law. He sees in God a Father to whom he owes a filial devotion, a Sovereign to whom he owes absolute obedience, a Benefactor to whom he is bound by ties of gratitude, a Savior who holds his heart to loyalty by the constraint of an overpowering love. He obeys not as a hireling nor as a slave but as a son. He bows before God in prayer with the constant petition in his heart, "Teach me to do Thy will." He searches the Scriptures that the law of his God may be in his heart, and he finds there his sufficient guide. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." In affliction he is submissive, in prosperity he is humble, in active duty he is zealous, in all things he strives to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.

Some do the will of God partially. They excel in certain duties that are congenial to their tastes or desires and disregard others that are irksome or that call for self-denial. Some are ready to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, but not ready to relieve their distress. Some are faithful in their attendance upon the sanctuary, but they do not give as God has prospered them for the support of religion. Some give to the Church, but forsake the assembling of themselves together for worship. Some bow in the sanctuary who never pray in the closet. Some are kind with their hands but sharp with their tongues. Some pay the debts they owe to society but forget the debts they

owe to the cause of Christ. Some keep the vineyards of others with great care, but are quite neglectful of their own. Some are careful not to defraud others of their substance but thoughtless of the damage they may inflict upon their good name. Some are generous in giving money but grudging of their time and service and hospitality. The requirements of our holy religion are indeed far reaching. "Thy commandment is exceeding broad." The will of God embraces general principles and particular laws. He only is in sympathy with God who delights to do in all things just as God would have him do. Who obeys God not because it suits his humor, but because it is right, and who makes no choice of duties, saying, "these I will do and these I will leave undone;" but cheerfully recognizes every duty as important and transgression in any particular as perilous. As no one can possibly tell what great issues may hang upon the smallest action done or omitted, the only safety lies in complete obedience to the entire will of God. The aim and prayer of the Christian continually is "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." God's will is done in heaven impartially, perfectly, continually and lovingly; and earth is like heaven only as men learn to practice with like spirit a willing obedience.

Now it is not claimed that the condition of admission into our Savior's family is that of perfect obedience. Christ has no perfect saints on earth.

All have various imperfections. All come short in many particulars. There has been but one sinless character among men and He is our great Pattern and Exemplar. But he who would be numbered among Christ's followers must make it his aim to obey God in all things. It must be his delight to do God's will and his grief to discover at any point that he is deficient in obedience. The controlling principle of his life must be that of Him who said, " My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish His work." And the prayer of Epaphras for the Colossian Christians is one he makes continually for himself, that he may " stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

These are the characters whom Christ loves. They possess His spirit; they bear His image; they love what He loves; they pursue what He pursues; they hate what is hateful to Him; they pity those whom He pities; forgive those whom He forgives, even their enemies, and they seek the lost as He seeks them and rejoice over their salvation as He rejoices. In all cases the image is not the perfect pattern; but it is like it. Believers are not gods; but they are new creatures, and gazing upon Him whom their souls love they are changed into the same image, from glory to glory.

Christ delights in the fruits of holiness seen in His people, imperfect as they are. And on some accounts they are more pleasing to Him than those seen in the angels in heaven. " Holiness in

heaven," says Dr. Edward Payson," is like flowers in Spring or fruit in Autumn, when they are expected; but holiness in a world so depraved as this is like fruit and flowers in the depths of winter; or like the blossoms and almonds on Aaron's rod, which proceed from a dead and sapless branch. When the delicious fruits of Southern climes can be made by the gardener's skill to flourish in our Northern regions, they are far more admired and prized than while growing in rich abundance in their native soil. So when holiness, whose native soil is heaven, is found in the comparatively frozen and barren soil of this world, which lieth in wickedness, it is viewed by the Lord of heaven, with peculiar pleasure and delight."

So much in description of those whom Christ counts among His spiritual kindred, and calls by the endearing names " my mother, my brother, my sister." And now briefly let us consider the privileges embraced in this relationship.

The first is that of honor. It was a distinguishing honor to belong to the family of Jesus. The angel who announced His birth spoke of Mary as highly favored and blessed among women; and truly she was. And whether these brethren were also the sons of Mary or only the cousins of our Lord, they might well prize a relationship that brought them within the circle of His kindred according to the flesh. No members of a royal family ever attained to so high a position, by virtue

of their connection with the monarch who sat upon the throne. Though Jesus of Nazareth dwelt in lowly estate among men, these humble peasants of Galilee who were His kindred friends will be remembered while time shall last, though thousands are forgotten whom the Cæsars, the Alexanders, and the Napoleons of the world have raised to honor. But the honor of being thus highly connected was not confined to the so-called "holy family." Jesus extends the prerogatives that are His as Lord of all to every one whom He has adopted into the household of faith. "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father in heaven the same is my brother and sister and mother."

"To you therefore which believe He is precious" (Pet. ii:7). The R. V. reads "To you . . . is the honor." What honor is like that of kinship with the Lord of glory?" To have a President, a Governor or an Emperor press our hand in some distinguished assembly and address us in the terms, "My brother, or my sister," would be a small thing compared with the glory that is bestowed upon us when He who is King of kings and Lord of lords declares He is not ashamed to call us brethren! To belong to Christ,—to be near to Christ,—to be like Christ,—this is the privilege of believers,—and greater glory is to follow; for our Elder Brother has declared, "Whoso shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God" (Luke xii:

8) and again, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (Rev. iii: 21).

Again, the privilege accorded those who are in the household of Christ is that of instruction. Christ's brethren are His disciples. They learn of Him. They are taught of the Lord. They have advantages of knowledge that others do not share. Family secrets are not disclosed to strangers. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." There are truths of religion that can be grasped only by a mind submissive to Christ. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

How blessed a thing it is to have for our instructor one who says "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven the same is my brother and sister and mother."

They who thus belong to Christ He loves with peculiar affection. The divine love is indeed offered to all. "God is love." And "God so loved the world." But love admits of difference both in quality and degree. God cannot love angels, saints and sinners with the same affection. Ties of kindred assert their claims among men and are of divine ordering. The proverb is significant, if lacking in dignity, "Blood is thicker than water." We cannot love all men with the emotions that stir us when we think of a brother, a sister, a mother.

Now Christ's love for those who bear His image, however imperfectly, is like that which we ought to cherish toward those who stand nearest to us in these earthly relationships. A mother! Who can measure the love called forth from the heart of dutiful sons or daughters toward one who has given them birth, nourished and cared for them in infancy and childhood, and poured the wealth of her sympathy, tenderness and instruction upon them as long as she lived? Jesus Himself has set us an example of filial gratitude and devotion, when on the cross He turned His dying gaze toward Mary and the disciple whom He loved and said to him, "Son, behold thy mother!" His last office of love before He died was toward her that bare Him. Seeing the sword piercing her soul, He forgot her not in the midst of His torments but commissioned John to take her to his own home. Yet this was but a type of His love for all who love the things that He loves.

How affecting was that scene in the upper room, where Christ had His last interview with His disciples. His love how amazing, how condescending, how tender, stronger than death, more enduring than time, passing knowledge! "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." "Greater love hath no man than this," He said, "that a man lay down his life for his friends." "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." "For whosoever

shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven the same is my brother, and sister and mother."

If you thus belong to Christ "you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God." "Set your affection on things above." Christ is there. Those who have gone before are there. There shall all who do the will of God be finally gathered to go no more out. And there, with Him who has loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, we shall forever be AT HOME.

"I worship thee, sweet will of God,
And all thy ways adore;
And every day I live, I long
To love thee more and more.

Man's weakness, waiting upon God,
Its end can never miss;
For men on earth no work to do
More angel-like than this.

He always wins who sides with God,
To him no chance is lost;
God's will is sweetest to him when
It triumphs at his cost.

Ill, that God blesses, is our good,
And unblest good is ill;
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be his dear will.

When obstacles and trials seem
Like prison-walls to be,
I do the little I can do,
And leave the rest to thee.

I have no cares, oh, blessed will!
For all my cares are thine;
I live in triumph, Lord, for thou
Hast made my triumphs thine."

XII

THAT GOOD PART

"THAT good part." Thus our Lord designates the portion Mary of Bethany had chosen. How striking and significant is His expression, and yet how simple it is! Only three short monosyllables, yet in them He sums up the blessings of the Gospel. "Never man spake like this man." The pearls he lets fall in all His teachings are well worth picking up; for He never spoke one idle word, and even His most casual remarks are full of instruction.

They who work in gold treasure up the smallest portions of the precious metal, and even the dust of the floor of the mint is found to be worth preserving. More precious than gold is every word of the Lord, and we may find enough to occupy us in profitable meditation if we consider only this brief characterization of true religion as that good part.

We need have no loss to understand what the Savior means by these words. Mary's example sufficiently explains them. Let us recall the scene.

Jesus is in the home at Bethany as an honored guest; but Martha, flustered, heated, troubled to

irritation, literally distracted, missed the essence of true hospitality.

In what does it consist? Not in elaborate entertainment and painful service which often causes embarrassment rather than enjoyment to those who are invited to share it; but in so deferring to a guest's tastes and wishes that he may feel at perfect ease, while such real bodily wants as he may have are taken care of.

Jesus cared more for the society of His Bethany friends than He did for feasting. The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister. He prized the engagements of social life for the opportunities they afforded Him of profitable conversation in familiar friendly intercourse. He had a wealth of instruction to impart, and nothing delighted Him more than to have a willing hearer drink in the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth. Mary discerned this. She saw what Jesus chiefly longed for, and she did what was most congenial to His spirit. It was not that she was neglectful of the duties of the household, but that she prized the companionship of the Master, and knew that He rejoiced to have her there that she "sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word." It was indeed a delightful season in the joyful hours of Jesus; and we may better understand, when we remember this, His ready defence of this loyal and loving disciple; "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Why is this thing that Mary chose,—fellowship with Jesus, true religion, vital piety,—distinctively "that good part?" It is evident that the meaning here is pre-eminently good. Every good gift is from above; but there is a choice of good things. "Get the best" is a slogan that may well apply to religion. Why is the religion the Savior here commends not only good but the best; so that it is emphatically that good part?

We answer, first, because it is needful. There are many things that are desirable that are not needful. A watch presents a better appearance in a gold case than in one of baser metal. The gold case is not needful, it is only ornamental. But if the main-spring be lacking, the watch ceases to be of any value as a time piece, no matter how rich the case that encloses the works.

So, steam is needful, or essential, for a steam engine; and no amount of glitter and display, however attractive, can make up for its loss. So there are many things in life that are desirable at times, in their proper places, that are not needful, or essential, to our well-being and happiness. This is true even of our physical life. Rich dainties are luxuries and sometimes the appetite craves them. It is not needful that we feast upon them; but without substantial food we must starve. Our daily bread is needful for the body. It is not needful that we breathe sweet perfumes; but our lungs must have air, if we are to live. Beautiful

pictures and pleasing landscapes are not needful to the sight; but we must have light in order to see at all. Life itself is needful for our enjoyment of any material, intellectual or social good. Take away what this one word life represents, and what are wealth, or honors, or pleasures or friendships? They are absolutely valueless. "All that a man hath will he give for his life." All the possessions of body and mind vanish if life is lost. It is needful for our present well-being.

If this is true of the natural life, it is also true of the spiritual life of the soul. There can be no spiritual prosperity and happiness without spiritual life.

Our Savior says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And this life, which begins with the new birth, can be found only in Christ. "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of God, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." Christ is the one thing needful to the beginning of the spiritual life, and to its continuance and completeness. Some things are made needful by accident or circumstance. They are occasionally needful. But Christ is always, absolutely and supremely needful. Needful for every one, and for all men. Needful in health and in sickness; in poverty and in wealth; in loneliness and in society; in loss and in gain; in dishonor and in favor; in

defeat and in triumph; in life and in death; in time and in eternity; and never more needful than when all other things are gone and there is nothing else!

"Jesus, engrave it on my heart
That Thou the one thing needful art.
I could from all things parted be;
But never, never, Lord, from Thee.

Needful is Thy most precious blood
To reconcile my soul to God;
Needful is Thine indulgent care;
Needful Thine all prevailing prayer."

What wonder that Jesus says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." And he adds the promise, "All these things shall be added unto you." This is that good part, then, further, because it embraces all other good things. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

We are not to understand that we are promised absolutely all things of a worldly nature; but He will give us all such things as are needful for our welfare, and all things absolutely that are needful for a complete Christian character and an abundant inheritance in Christ. There are many things that we need in order to salvation, but they are so united that they are virtually one thing, and are all embraced in that good part. We are saved by faith alone; but not by the faith that is alone. The apostle Peter enjoins us, "Giving all diligence, add

to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." These are not independent virtues, successively attained, but all meet and harmonize in the same Christian character.

So is it with all other blessings of salvation; justification, the forgiveness of sins, sanctification, prayer, repentance, strength and willingness to do God's will, are all the fruits of the Holy Spirit. If we have any one of these things we have them all in some measure.

We may find illustration of this unity of the things that accompany salvation when we consider our physical being. There are many things necessary to a complete physical manhood. A good heart, healthy circulation of the blood in the veins and arteries, sound lungs, a well-balanced nervous system and brain, the organs that take care of the digestion and the assimilation of food; all these things are vital; but they are so connected that if we have any of them we have them all.

So is it with the spiritual man. The vital things that belong to our salvation and spiritual life are so bound together that we cannot have any of them without having the rest; though, as is often the case in the physical man, certain needful elements of our spiritual life are more strongly developed than others.

There is nothing, however, conflicting among them. One grace is never cultivated at the expense of another. They mutually support and strengthen each other. Faith promotes prayer; and prayer increases faith. Humility promotes penitence, and penitence increases humility. Love opens the heart to spiritual knowledge, and knowledge deepens love. Faith, knowledge, humility and patience strengthen hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart. In fact, we may consider the bearing of one Christian grace upon another, in endless variety, without finding any jarring or conflicting interests among them.

The reverse is true of the various things that men esteem needful apart from Christ. Riches are often amassed at the expense of health, and sometimes of character and reputation. Coveted positions are often obtained at the sacrifice of friendship or of honor. To acquire learning, men give up money-making, social engagements and pleasures; while those carried away with sensual indulgence must pay the price in money, health, reputation and ease of conscience. And the passions themselves that are aroused in the pursuit of these separate and lower ends are no less antagonistic. Avarice and prodigality, pride and jealousy, envy and love of ease assert themselves with conflicting insistence in the heart of the worldly-minded. And the means by which these

things that seem so necessary are sought are alike varied and conflicting. There is no harmony, no united action, possible in worldly ends; and since the objects themselves that are deemed necessary to happiness or success are continually changing, there can be no unity of purpose or consistent endeavor in their indulgence. They are not one thing, but many things, illusory, transient, disappointing.

Salvation is one consistent whole, though it embraces so many parts. In Christ Jesus we have the blessed unit of spiritual good. In the Gospel we acquire one pearl of great price; in a word, THAT GOOD PART.

Again, the religion of Jesus is that good part, because it emphasizes the best part of our nature. Every good gift is from above; but we may repeat the remark that some good gifts are better than others. When our Savior bids us seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, He points us to the higher things of life and bids us seek them not only first in the order of time and first in the order of desire, but first in the order of importance.

In every other sphere but that of religion men readily recognize a difference in values. Lesser interests are subordinated to greater. Things eagerly sought after at one time are lost sight of as more important claims are recognized. Here is a farmer, busily engaged in gathering in his grain

from the fields before the impending shower falls, when he finds his barn threatened by fire. He leaves the grain and hastens to the barn, only to find that his house is now in danger. But grain, barn and house are alike left to perish when he discovers that he must save a wife or child from some forgotten room of the burning dwelling. He is willing that everything else shall be lost that a precious life may be saved. So men continually show their estimate of comparative values in the things of this life. Religion does not rebuke this, but points to interests superior to them all and bids us covet earnestly the best gifts. We are not to despise the claims of the body or of the mind; but the soul is worth infinitely more than either. He only chooses that pre-eminently good part who is rich toward God, because he is wise unto salvation.

The permanence of this possession is no small element of its value. Other good things are temporal; this only is eternal. Riches take to themselves wings. Honors are fleeting. Friendships may be lost in one short hour. Pleasures are short-lived. Health is uncertain. Life itself must eventually fail; but that good part shall never be taken away from any who have truly possessed it. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. If our names are written in heaven, we have a treasure there that faileth not and that will enrich us to eternity.

This good part must be chosen. It will not come

to any soul that remains passive and indifferent. Mary found it because she desired it and esteemed it above everything else and earnestly sought it. She sat at Jesus' feet and heard His words. She believed to the saving of her soul. She opened her heart to His love, and she loved Him who first loved her. She took the place He assigned her, and was ready for waiting or for service, as His will was revealed for her obedience. All these were voluntary acts; but they were definite, decisive, controlling. So must it be with every one who obtains that good part.

Salvation and eternal life will never come to you, my reader, as a matter of course, without your volition and definite choice. You will never wake up some morning and find that you have drifted into the kingdom of heaven. You will not find resting on your bosom, by any sort of spiritual magic, the pearl of great price. Salvation is free, and the grace of God is for all who will receive it; but receive it you must, if you would be saved. Whosoever will may come; but you must come to Jesus Christ, if you would have life.

Whatever your attainments in possessions or gifts may be, your life will end in disaster without the salvation of your soul. Whatever your disappointments or losses may be in this world, happy will be your lot if you have chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from you.

"Oh, that the loving woman, she who sat
So long a listener at her Master's feet
Had left us Mary's Gospel;—all she heard
Too sweet, too subtle for the ear of man."

XIII

THE CROWNING SATISFACTION

WE have spoken of the fellowship of the Father as a supreme element in our Savior's joy. We have not many prayers of Jesus recorded; but in the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel we have what has rightly been called His High-Priestly prayer. He prayed aloud; and evidently that He might thus initiate His disciples into close fellowship with God, and, as it were, "lift them into that divine sphere in which He Himself dwelt" (Godet).

The most significant feature of this prayer is its note of victory. "I have glorified Thee on the earth," is His cry to the Father, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." It is the exultant cry of a runner, with his hand upon the goal. The triumph of one who was more than conqueror. Nor does it detract from the significance of His words that the great consummation, His victory over death, was yet to be accomplished. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. "I came into the world," He says, "not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." As the time approached that He should be

received up, he steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. "I have a baptism to be baptized with," He cries, "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." His whole soul was bent upon meeting the final crisis, and it was as impossible that He should fail as it is that God should lie; that the promises that had been multiplying for four thousand years should fail; that the walls of the Church that had been steadily rising throughout so many dispensations should crumble into ruins; and that the Savior's mission to the earth and His life-work upon it should all be in vain. In the certainty of this final victory our Lord speaks of it as already won, and includes it in the account of His stewardship, as He declares "I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do." And by thus looking toward the glory that lay beyond the cross he fortified His soul for the agonies of death.

Our blessed Lord glorified the Father upon earth, first, by His holy life. The conception of such a character as Jesus of Nazareth exhibited would entitle any writer of fiction to imperishable fame. That such a life should have actually been lived on this sin-stricken earth is the great miracle of the ages. The life of Jesus Christ is the one bright figure that appears on the dark background of human depravity. This is the one stainless robe worn by humanity. Among the jewels of the King of kings this is the pearl of great price.

The light of the law shone on the Jews; Christ is the life and the light of men. This one peerless life mankind may study through all the ages and never exhaust. To reproduce it in forms more impressive than those given by the Gospel writers is a hopeless task. Who can paint the opal, with its lustre and flash and play of colors? Who can depict upon canvas the brilliancy of the diamond, with its many-sided splendor? Who can set the glory of the sun before us in such gorgeous coloring as that in which it lights up the mountains, the sea, or the evening sky? And who but a divine Artist could give us a picture of the Sun of Righteousness, shedding His glory among men? Yet here is not fancy but sober history. This perfect life has been. His sinlessness was His glory and the glory of the Father who had sent Him. "God is best known in Christ; the sun is not seen but by the light of the sun." *

And so it is declared, "He was the brightness of the glory of the Father and the express image of His person" (Heb. i:3). "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Pet. ii:22). His life was a life of holy obedience. His constant prayer was "Not my will but Thine be done." He was Incarnate Benevolence. He went about doing good. The character of Jesus Christ stands alone. We find nothing in all history adequately to foreshadow or anticipate it;

* Bridge, 1600-1670.

nothing in all nature to illustrate it; no conception of man's imagination to equal its reality. There is no stronger proof of the truth of Christianity than this unique portrayal of the Gospel narratives. That it is only the product of human imagination is the most incredible of all suppositions.

. . . Jesus Christ glorified the Father by His reverence. He never for one moment forgot that He was sent from God. He had placed Himself in the hands of the Father for a specific mission, and the one end of His earthly life was to do the will of Him that sent Him. He never dishonored God by a single complaint at the allotments of Providence. He never murmured at any burden He was called to bear, nor at any service that He was called to render. He never spoke of God save in the terms of the deepest devotion. He honored the divine name among men as no other man that ever lived honored it. His faith in God was supreme; and though there were some things hidden from Him, as the Son, He believed unswervingly in the wisdom of those appointments the Father had put in His own power.

There is perhaps no lesson that the people of God need more to learn than this of reverence for the Divine Name. It is amazing to consider how God and His ways are often spoken of by His professed followers, as if it were continually an open question whether God is wise and good and

whether the Judge of all the earth will do right. In these days of speculation and conflicting opinion the very foundations of religion are being continually assailed. Men not only doubt concerning the deeper mysteries of our faith, but they doubt even the inspiration of the Scriptures and the being of God. Doubt will never die out of the world until sin dies out of it. Faith will never be found where there is not spiritual life. But, however the great verities of the Christian faith are called in question by an unbelieving world, that knows nothing of the power of Christ in the heart, it is amazing that one who has experienced the forgiveness of sins, who has felt the power of the divine life within, who knows that Jesus Christ is the Divine Son of God, because the love of God has been shed abroad in His heart by the Holy Ghost, should ever be found virtually arraigning the plans of Providence or calling in question the divine honor.

Jesus Christ never argued about the truths of religion. He revealed them, affirmed them, emphasized them, appealing only to His works as bearing witness that He spake in God's name. But in all His mention of the Father He maintained that holy reverence which lies at the basis of all true piety. The prayer of His whole lifetime found expression at the end of His course, " Father, glorify Thy name " (John xii: 28). " I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out

of the world." "I have declared unto them Thy name and will declare it" (John xvii: 6–26).

But, more than this, Jesus glorified God on the earth by His revelations of divine truth. He was the Light of the world. He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. He was the divine Word, the only possible expression of the Deity that men could understand. Never man spake like this man; for never had man such lofty truths to utter, or could express them in such simple yet significant and sublime language. He was, beyond all comparison, THE GREAT TEACHER. Well might His hearers, who yet so imperfectly understood them, marvel at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth. The world has been marvelling at them ever since. Whole libraries have been written upon them, yet their fullness is as inexhaustible as ever. God had been communicating His word to men through all the ages past. Moses and the prophets had spoken; and the volume of Revelation was already ample; but, in comparison with the fuller teachings of Jesus, all that had been given to men before His advent was as the morning twilight to the rising sun. Not only did He reaffirm, emphasize, and set in clearer light truths concerning God that had been already revealed, but He set before the astonished gaze of men "things that had been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13: 25). He

was the most original of all teachers for He first proclaimed in their fullness many important truths among which we may enumerate the purpose of God in redemption, the work of the Holy Spirit, the spirituality of the Church, immortality, resurrection and the final judgment. But God was no less glorified by the gracious words of the Savior that made known so clearly to men the love of the Father. What could better glorify the divine name than such declarations as these; "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved" (John iii: 16, 17). "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth . . . The Father seeketh such to worship Him" (John iv: 24, 23). "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi: 37). And in all these marvellous words He glorified the Father by constantly affirming, "My doctrine is not mine but His that sent me" (John vii: 14). In His sacerdotal prayer He says to the Father, "I have given them Thy word" (John xvii: 14).

Beyond all this, Jesus glorified the Father by His wonderful works. Miracles had been wrought by the Old Testament prophets; but the miracles of Christ were greater wonders than had ever been

seen on earth, were wrought in greater profusion than those of all the prophets together, were accomplished in the name of Christ Himself as the sent of God, and were miracles of mercy, designed to call the attention of the world to Him who had taken upon Himself the infirmities of sinners, that so taking He might heal them. What wonder that when the paralytic was healed and forgiven, "the multitude marvelled and glorified God who had given such power unto men" (Matt. ix: 18). What wonder that when Bartimeus received His sight "all the people when they saw it gave praise unto God" (Luke xviii: 43). What wonder that after a day of multiplied mercy "the multitudes wondered when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk and the blind to see; and they glorified the God of Israel" (Matt. xv: 31). What wonder that the disciples, as they drew near the holy city, at the time of Christ's triumphal entry, began to praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty work that they had seen; that children's hosannahs were heard in the temple, or that our Lord should say, in exultation, of the divine glory, "I tell you if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out!" (Luke xix: 4).

Yet what were all wonders wrought by Christ compared with the miracles of resurrection; when He stood by the grave of His dead friend and said, "Lazarus, come forth!" when he took the sleep-

ing maid by the hand and said, "I say unto thee, arise!" when he stopped the mournful procession at the gate of Nain, and delivered again to his mother the son mourned as dead; and surpassing all else, when He demonstrated by His own rising from the dead the truth of those sublime words, "I am the resurrection and the life!"

But most of all was God glorified by our adorable Redeemer in the great work of salvation. This is the one stupendous wonder of the universe, the one great mystery into whose depths angels desire to look, the one achievement that stretches into eternity with its far reaching effects.

It would be aside from our purpose to dwell upon the fact that redemption took place upon so insignificant a place apparently as our little earth among the splendid worlds that are under the government of God; yet this fact must forever center the eyes of all intelligent beings upon this favored planet as the theater for the most stupendous exhibitions of divine power and the most amazing displays of divine grace that eternity can ever produce. These three little words localizing His work deserve special emphasis, "I have glorified Thee on the earth." So far as we know, this is the only world where ever has been proclaimed the forgiveness of sins. The only world where the ruin of sin has been met and the holy law of God vindicated in mercy. And in this world, where God had been avowedly dethroned by the rebellion

of the being appointed to rule as lord under Him, Jesus Christ glorified God by setting up His everlasting kingdom, the glory of which is love.

It greatly adds to the wonders of redemption that it was accomplished amid such exhibitions of moral corruption as even this sin-cursed world had never before seen.

What a picture do the Evangelists present to us as they hold up before us, in their artless and unaffected narratives, the blind rage of the Pharisees, the mocking scorn of the Sadducees, the brutal cruelty of the Romans, the ignorant frenzy of the multitudes; and amid it all the divine Sufferer, majestic in His meekness, unruffled, unmoved, undaunted, unreviling, pouring out His soul unto death, a voluntary victim, against whom, but for His own purpose to save, His guilty murderers could have had no power at all!

What a spectacle! The Son of God, expiring amid mockery and shame that He might give life to the very men who had become His betrayers and murderers! Praying in the midst of His dying agonies for His unrelenting persecutors; snatching from the very jaws of destruction one of the guiltiest of the race, that He might have in the hour of His death a signal trophy of redeeming grace, and in the forgiveness of the penitent thief proclaim salvation to the chief of sinners!

Thus, as has been truthfully affirmed, " It was at the very place where man was most dishonoring

God that His representative was honoring Him. Where man was exhibiting the most appalling wickedness, there His mercy was giving the most signal displays of goodness. Where man, breaking loose from all restraint, was abandoning himself to open rebellion, there his substitute was becoming obedient even unto death. Where the wildest passions that ever stirred the human heart were raging uncontrolled, there One, in our own name and nature, was giving the most loving display of a tenderness that could not be ruffled and a love that could not be quenched. Where sin abounded there righteousness did much more abound. The representative is lifted high upon the cross that He might become a spectacle; and in the view of all men, in the view of wondering angels, in the view of God, glorify God, wherein He had been most dishonored." *

Nor is the glory of God in redemption confined to the transactions of Calvary. The whole history of the Church is a manifestation of the divine glory, established in the earth by the life and death of Christ. The triumphs of the Cross have been wonderful, and the design of the Redeemer is that unto God shall be "glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages" (Eph. iii: 21).

No creature can glorify God as Jesus has glorified Him upon the earth; yet God will be continually glorified as Christ is glorified by His peo-

* McCosh, "Divine Government," p. 474.

ple. Every soul for whom Christ died may glorify God by forsaking sin for the service of Christ, by believing in the Son of God and by open confession of His name. Every believer may glorify God by being transformed in character by the renewing of the Holy Ghost . . . "and we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii: 18). Yet only in the new heavens and the new earth, where all the ransomed of the Lord shall be gathered and the Church shall appear before God, "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing," will the full significance of the Savior's words be known, "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

HALLOWED BE THY NAME

O holy prayer! too deep, too pure
For lips unsanctified;
O full petition! all too broad
For man's self-righteous pride;
Too high, too near the throne of God
For earth-born men to reach;
Thou God alone, our sinful lips
Its utterance can teach!

Our graceless prayer falls drearily
Upon the sterile ground;
And listless hang our empty hands
By unseen fetters bound;

Our lifeless souls can never rise
 Above the mists of earth,—
Faith folds her wings—love languishes
 Forgetful of her birth!

Great Spirit! change these rebel hearts,
 Wash out each crimson stain;
Purge them with hyssop, Lord, that so
 They may be white again.
O deign these stammering, untaught lips
 To sanctify anew,
Teach thou our chastened hearts, dear Lord,
 To suffer and to do.

O teach us in th' Eternal Ear,
 With penitential love,
To breathe the One prevailing Name,
 All other names above;
Like precious ointment poured forth
 That Name shall calm the breast,—
So rich, so full to satisfy
 The soul that longs for rest!

O sacred, thrice exalted Name,
 We worship and adore;
Help us in spirit and in truth
 To praise thee evermore;
O holy, holy, holy Lord,
 Thy love we will proclaim,
Till earth and heaven shall join to say
 All hallowed be thy Name!

MYRA.

XIV

HEARTS AFLAME

OUR Lord was crucified on Friday. The next day was the Jewish Sabbath, and the disciples rested according to the commandment. Yet what a sad and peculiar Sabbath it was to the infant Church! And how strangely joyless was the dawning of the first Lord's Day!

Never had the hearts of the disciples been filled with deeper despondency than on the morning of the resurrection.

Their Rulers had triumphed. The cause they loved had suffered defeat. Their beloved Master had been put to a cruel and shameful death. They had themselves borne Him to Joseph's tomb, and in that rocky sepulchre they buried with Him their Messianic hopes, and could only say, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel!" (Luke xxiv: 21).

Yet, as the hours of this eventful morning wore away their hearts were strangely agitated with new fears and hopes. The sepulchre had been early visited by the women who intended to embalm the Savior's body. They returned with minds stirred and excited to report that the tomb was empty, and

that they had seen a vision of angels who told them that Jesus was risen from the dead.

The story was so far confirmed by others that it was soon known that the body was not in the sepulchre; but the further testimony of the women seemed to the disciples as idle tales, and they believed it not.

Yet while none perhaps believed in our Lord's resurrection save those to whom he had thus far personally appeared, it was impossible that such things should be reported without strongly affecting all their minds. Conflicting emotions of surprise, hope, fear, doubt, and vague expectation took possession of them, so that they could talk of little else than the wonderful things that had happened.

It was on the afternoon of this eventful day that two of the disciples started for Emmaus, a village seven and one-half miles from Jerusalem, where one of them probably resided.

The road leading out of the City passed by Calvary, and perhaps they could see still standing that fatal cross where so lately their Lord had hung. What wonder that as they walked they were sad? What wonder that one theme above every other absorbed their thoughts "as they communed together and reasoned?"

And now as they talk a stranger joins them. Perhaps their first feeling is one of disappointment, but they soon find that the conversation need not

be diverted from the channel it had been pursuing.

There is something winning in the new-comer's address and he seems to enter with heartfelt sympathy into their grief. Yet they confess their surprise that any one should be long in Jerusalem and be at a loss to understand what would naturally be the subject of conversation between Israelites at such a time. The Unknown draws from them the story of the wonder-working Prophet of Nazareth. They speak of His teachings and of His miracles; of the good He accomplished among the people; of the hopes of deliverance He inspired—of the rising jealousy of the high priests; of the apprehension—the crucifixion—the burial; and end with the strange story of the women who visited the empty tomb, which evidently they do not credit, for their last words are in mournful cadence, "but Him they saw not."

And now their sympathetic hearer becomes their Instructor. Their implied rebuke of His ignorance of the great events of the passover week is turned upon them with pointed effect, "Oh, fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken; ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory" (Luke xxiv: 26).

Yet "faithful are the wounds of a friend" and the Stranger's rebuke wins instead of repelling these disciples, as He takes up the writings of the Old Testament, with which they are thoroughly

familiar, and explains them as they have never heard them explained before.

We know the sequel, and cannot maintain the disguise if we would. It is Jesus who talks with them; but as yet they know Him not.

What wonder must have seized their minds as they heard so entrancing a discourse from a Passover pilgrim. We can almost hear them exclaim "What learned Rabbi is this? What gracious words proceed out of His mouth! What clearness of statement! What cogency of reasoning! What new views of the prophecies! What absorbing interest does this stranger himself take in the Messiah!"

Let us also draw near and attend.—Jesus the Christ expounding in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself—What a teacher and what a theme!

Let us consider first the discourse itself, and secondly its effects upon the two disciples.

The Evangelist has not indeed recorded for us this remarkable exposition of the Scriptures, by the greatest of all the prophets, but the brief outline Luke gives us suggests an orderly method beginning with the first promise given in Eden of the coming Deliverer and following the track of prophecy growing broader and more distinct until Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, points to John whose mission was to proclaim, "Behold the Lamb of God."

He doubtless unfolded to them the meaning of that mysterious promise, that is the germ of all subsequent prophecy, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.

He explained to them the significance of that strange scene upon Mount Moriah where Isaac was spared and a ram provided for sacrifice. He declared the meaning of the Passover and the sprinkling with blood. He recalled the history of the fiery serpents in the camp of Israel, and the method of recovery divinely ordained, and caused them to remember the saying of their now crucified Lord "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." He spoke of the manna given to Israel, until they saw new meaning in their Master's words "I am the living bread which came down from heaven."

He discoursed of the smitten rock; and they remembered how Christ said, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." But especially He gave interpretation to every type and ceremony that regarded Messiah's death. He gave light to the darkest parts of the Law, order to the most confused and significance to the most unmeaning.

He told them that the tabernacle was but a shadow; that the solemn day of atonement, the entering in of the High Priest, the sacrifices made year by year continually were not the very image of the things. Not a lamb, nor a kid, nor a dove, but

was a type of Christ. The solemn laying on of hands, the gushing blood, the smoking altar, the fragrant incense, all had their significance and pointed to the Messiah. And in all the Scriptures Christ was predicted as one who should be rejected, and suffer and die.

He was, indeed, foretold as a blessing. Jacob named Him "Shiloh," and Balaam a "Star," and Isaiah "the Mighty God" and "the Great Shepherd" of Israel. But it was through His sufferings He was to enter into His glory and redeem His people.

"Do you not see," this wonderful interpreter must have said, "how remarkably the prophecies seem to be fulfilled in just such sufferings as you declare your Jesus has undergone? Did not David say that His own familiar friend should betray Him; that His enemies should mock Him; that they should shoot out the lip and shake the head at Him; that the wicked should encompass Him and vex Him; that they should give Him vinegar and gall to drink; and that they should pierce His hands and His feet; should part His garments among them and cast lots upon His vesture; should bring Him into the dust of death, and yet His soul should not be left in the grave, nor His flesh see corruption?

"What but a suffering Christ did Isaiah describe when he said He should give His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the

hair, and should hide not His face from shame and spitting? Did not Isaiah expressly say that Christ should be despised and rejected, that He should bear our griefs, that He should be led as a lamb to the slaughter? Was He not to be numbered with the transgressors—to bear the sin of many, to make intercession for the transgressors—to make His soul a sin-offering—to die with the wicked yet to make His grave with the rich?

"Did not Daniel say that Messiah should be cut off, but not for Himself? And Zechariah that He should be sold for thirty pieces of silver, the purchase money of the potter's field? And again that men should look upon Him whom they had pierced? And indeed apart from these Old Testament prophecies, were not the hills and valleys of Judea still ringing with the prophetic voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Behold the Lamb of God, the sacrifice for the world's sin!' Oh, fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken—ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?"

The way to Emmaus was long; but it had never seemed so short before. For two hours this entrancing exposition may have proceeded, and yet it has seemed all too brief to these willing hearers. What an inestimable treasure is the word of God hidden in the heart! Had these disciples been entirely unacquainted with the teachings of the

prophets, their hearts would not have been set on fire that day as this unknown Teacher expounded unto them the Scriptures.

But now these wonderful words have awakened strange emotions within them, and they cannot let the stranger go. Jesus deals with them "as He had done with the two blind beggars; with the disciples in the storm; with the Syrophœnician woman." * He draws out the strength of desire and affection and then yields to the urgency He has Himself excited.

He appeared ready to pass on, but they constrained Him, saying "Abide with us, for it is toward evening and the day is far spent—and He went in to tarry with them."

Perhaps continuing His discourse He now uses words they have heard before from His own lips. He takes bread as they have heard before from the apostles Jesus took it at that last Passover feast, He breaks it as Jesus then did, while tone, countenance and manner all are changed. The veil has dropped—the scales have fallen from their eyes—the Savior has started from disguise. They know Him now, yes, Jesus, to whom their hearts were never so knit before! But e'er they can embrace Him, He has vanished from sight! What wonder they say one to another "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way and while He opened to us the Scriptures."

* Hanna.

How were the minds of these disciples affected by the Savior's words?

(1) Their hearts burned with surprise and admiration.

They were surprised at the stranger. Such knowledge of the Scriptures, such skill in interpretation, such success in making what had been obscure clear to their vision might well awaken their wonder and fill them with admiration of the great plan of salvation itself.

They were surprised at the new views of revelation they now grasped. How wonderful God's ways! How different from all their former thoughts of a Messianic Kingdom! Yet how honoring to God that even in Salvation divine justice may not give way, and divine love stops not at the most costly sacrifice! With hearts stirred by these new truths, they were kindled with eager longing to know more. Yet burning with desire for further instruction they must have had something of Paul's awe-struck admiration of the great mysteries of redemption and have said within their hearts "Oh, the depths!"

(2) Their hearts burned with shame at their own ignorance and unbelief.

Many of these things the stranger told them they now remembered to have heard before. Did not Jesus Himself tell them the Son of man must be lifted up? Had He not plainly declared "I lay down my life that I may take it again?" Nay,

had He not even predicted His resurrection on the third day? Why were their minds so dull, why were they so slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken?

(3) Their hearts burned with the kindling joy of a new hope.

Never had they known such sadness as when they left Jerusalem. And, as we have said, the sight of Calvary must have revived their sorrow. There Jesus had died. There with their own eyes they had seen Him hanging in mortal agony. They had heard the bitter taunts of His enemies, as they bade Him come down from the cross. Yet He seemed helpless in the hands of wicked men. They had heard His expiring cry. They had helped to take Him down and knew that His form was lifeless and cold. They had seen Him laid in the tomb—and this was the third day since these things were done. Their Lord was gone from them forever. Hope there was none.

But as the stranger opened the Scriptures, and spoke of a suffering Messiah, how their minds must have been stirred with conflicting emotions of fear and hope. Could it be after all that the very things that had plunged them in despair were the strongest proofs of the Messiahship of Jesus?

Yet how remarkably prophecy and history agreed as they were placed side by side! Clearly the death of Jesus fulfilled all the conditions of

prophecies that were extended over more than 3000 years!

Was it too much to believe that there was more in the story of the empty tomb and the vision of angels seen by the women that very morning than they had been disposed to credit? *What if it was all right after all,* and Jesus was risen as He said? What wonder their hearts burned within them at the very thought!

(4) Their hearts burned with gratitude toward the stranger. He had given them new views of truth. He had showed them the warmest sympathy in their deepest sorrow. He had manifested a rare power of discernment and skill in probing and healing the wounds of their spirit, and they were drawn toward Him with love and confidence. How could they let Him go, who had given them the only comfort their stricken hearts had known since their Lord was taken away? It was not conventional courtesy—nor merely consideration for Him, that drew from their yearning bosoms the earnest invitation—"Abide with us!"

(5) Their hearts burned with eager desire to tell others of their new hopes. The convictions that had been growing within them as Jesus talked with them by the way became certainty as He was made known to them in the breaking of bread; and assuredly the inward flame was not quenched by this welcome revelation.

Tidings such as they could now bring to the

other disciples might not be withheld until morning. Darkness was already gathering over the earth, and they had walked a long distance that afternoon, but with what eagerness do they now retrace their footsteps! With what different emotions do they hasten back to Jerusalem from those that possessed them as they left the Holy City! "And they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem," surely with winged feet, "and found the eleven gathered together and them that were with them"—and best of all they found their hearts also burning with new hope; for they were saying "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon." "And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread."

Oh, joyful meeting! Oh, wonderful tidings! Oh, eventful day! Hearts that had burned alone all too long, consumed with inward musing, now leaped together into flame. Who can doubt that that saying which afterward became so dear to the early Christians was repeated again and again—"The Lord is risen indeed!" tho' the tidings seemed "too good to be true" and none could believe or realize them at once as they desired to do (Mark xvi: 13).

And now, to the little assembly thus prepared for His presence, Christ is revealed! We need not wonder that fear mingled with their joy; but their fears were soon quelled. No other form could

yield such proofs, in pierced hands and feet and gaping side, that the Crucified stood before them. No other voice could speak with such loving authority allaying the rising billows of fright as He had stilled the tempest upon Galilee, saying " Peace be unto you! "

" Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord! " " Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures " (Luke xxiv: 45).

And what shall we say of the rapture that filled the Savior's heart, as He stood triumphant in the midst of this wondering band of disciples? Surely among the most joyful hours of Jesus we may name this interview and His conversation with the disciples on the way to Emmaus.

Christian brethren, have not our hearts burned within us many times, as taught by the blessed Spirit Christ has promised, we have been instructed in the way as He has opened to us the Scriptures? Have not we too tested and proved the value of Christian conference and found the Master's presence with us as we have talked with Christian friends of all these things which happened so long ago, but are just as important for us as if they had just transpired? Then if with hearts burning with desire and love we come together, to commune with each other and with Him, He will meet with us and make our hearts glad.

He is not indeed even here the object of bodily

vision: "for we walk by faith not by sight." But if we listen to His teachings and our hearts burn within us as on our pilgrim journey He opens to us the Scriptures; in the end of the way He with whom we have so lovingly walked will be revealed. Our eyes shall no longer be holden. We shall see the king in His beauty, and He will not vanish from our sight. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness" (Ps. xvii: 15).

Here we close our meditations on the JOYFUL HOURS OF JESUS. Let it be with grateful hearts that we recognize His deep-seated happiness in His life-work, and even in His death; and let us never forget that His joy was the joy of service and of sacrifice. It was for us that He spent these joyful hours upon the earth. If our hearts burn within us as He opens to us the Scriptures, let Him lead us to a like surrender to the will of God and to like happiness in the joy of the Lord, which is the strength of the soul. Let us see new significance in the words addressed to the servant who has been faithful over a few things and has thus become qualified to understand the true secret of a happy life; "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

'Tis evening now!
O Savior, wilt not thou
Enter my home and heart,
Nor ever hence depart,
Even when the morning breaks,
And earth again awakes
Thou wilt abide with me,
And I with thee!

The world is old!
Its air grows dull and cold;
Upon its aged face
The wrinkles come apace;
Its western sky is wan,
Its youth and joy are gone,
O Master, be our light,
When o'er us falls the night.

Evil is round!
Iniquities abound;
Our cottage will be lone,
When the great Sun is gone;
O Savior, come and bless,
Come, share our loneliness,
We need a Comforter,
Take up thy dwelling here.

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